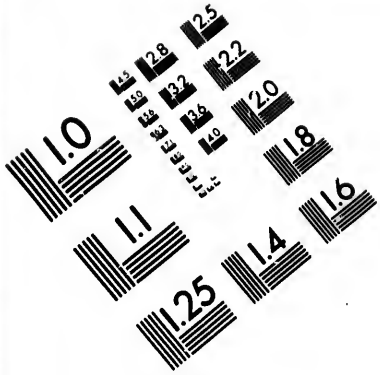


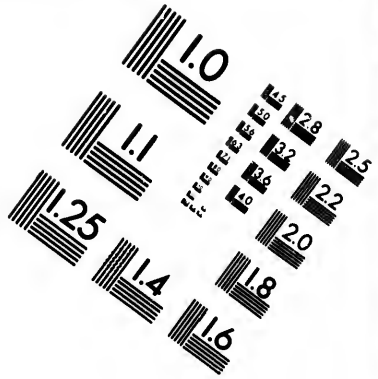
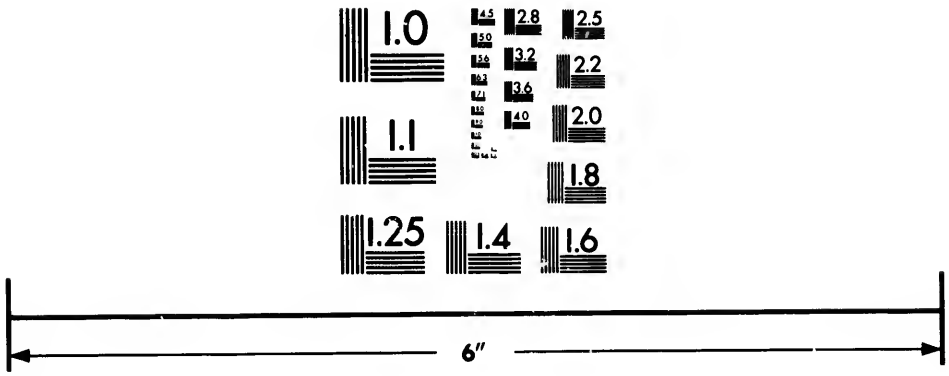
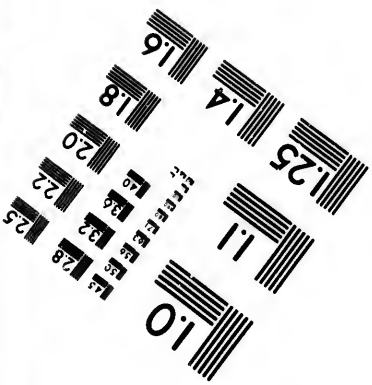
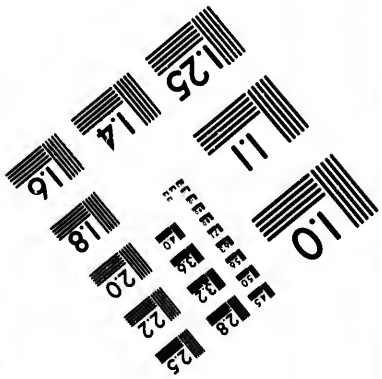


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)







Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

Technical and Bibliographic Notes/Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming, are checked below.

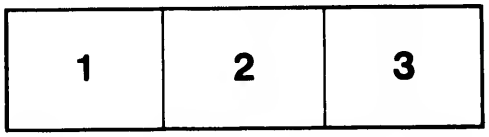
L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

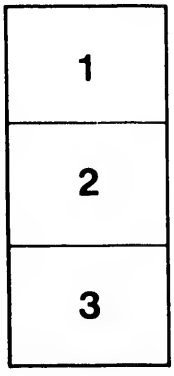
- ☐ Coloured covers/ Couverture de couleur
- ☑ Covers damaged/ Couverture endommagée
- ☐ Covers restored and/or laminated/ Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- ☐ Cover title missing/ Le titre de couverture manque
- ☐ Coloured maps/ Cartes géographiques en couleur
- ☐ Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black)/ Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- ☐ Coloured plates and/or illustrations/ Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- ☐ Bound with other material/ Relié avec d'autres documents
- ☑ Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin/ La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distortion le long de la marge intérieure
- ☐ Blank leaves added during restoration may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming/ Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.
- ☐ Additional comments:/ Commentaires supplémentaires:

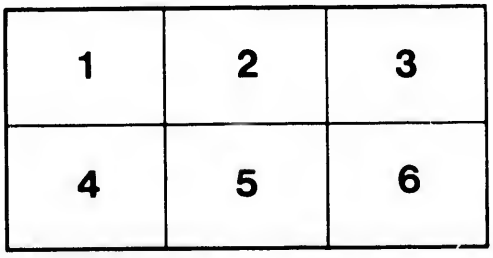
- ☐ Coloured pages/ Pages de couleur
- ☐ Pages damaged/ Pages endommagées
- ☐ Pages restored and/or laminated/ Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- ☑ Pages discoloured, stained or foxed/ Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- ☐ Pages detached/ Pages détachées
- ☑ Showthrough/ Transparence
- ☑ Quality of print varies/ Qualité inégale de l'impression
- ☐ Includes supplementary material/ Comprend du matériel supplémentaire
- ☐ Only edition available/ Seule édition disponible
- ☐ Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image/ Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below/
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10X	12X	14X	16X	18X	20X	22X	24X	26X	28X	30X	32X
				✓							







Price, 25 Cents. THE CHIMNEY CORNER SERIES. No. 44.

The Hermit of the Cliffs

By Mrs. May Agnes Fleming.

M. UPTON, - PUBLISHER, - NEW

THE HERMIT OF THE CLIFFS

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO FRIENDS.

"And its hame, hame, hame,
I fain wad be—
Hame, hame, hame,
In my ain countrie."
—Allen Cunningham.

MORNING on the ocean! Gradually rose the sun in the red east, sailing slowly and majestically toward the meridian—a burning jewel of fire set in the deep-blue sky. Light, fleecy clouds dotted the azure firmament here and there, looking as pure and as stainless as snowflakes or the white wings of angels. The balmy south breeze scarcely rippled the surface of the deep, or filled the canvas of the good ship Mermaid, as she glided gracefully onward, bound for the bright shores of America.

The day was intensely hot. The crew lay in groups, idly, about the deck. The captain—a stately-looking man or forty or thereabouts—paced up and down the quarter-deck—now letting his eyes wander over his men, or giving them some order; now looking aloft with a sailor's pride in his handsome craft; and now raising his glass to sweep the horizon, on which no living thing was to be seen save themselves.

Leaning over the taffrail, stood two young men. The elder appeared to be about twenty-five years of age—tall and finely proportioned, with an eye like an eagle and hair that

——"To shame might bring,
The plumage of the raven's wing."

He stood leaning over the side, his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the spray flashing in the sunlight as the ship cut her way through the rippling waves. His hat was off, and the cool breeze lifted lightly the jetty locks off his high, white brow.

His companion was a youth some three or four years his junior, with a frank, handsome face, and laughing hazel eyes. His look of careless ease was very different from the proud reserve of his companion, but some secret bond of sympathy bound those two together.

"Well, Fred," said the younger of the two, continuing their conversation, "since, as you say, you neither have a lady-love in America nor expect a legacy there, I confess it puzzles me to know what inducement could have been strong enough to make you quit Paris."

"Very easily told, my dear fellow; I have started for America at the express command of my worthy father."

"Whew! what a dutiful son you are, Fred. And, pray, what has brought Sir William to that rebellious land?"

"To assist in subduing the rebellious Yankees, of course!" replied the young man, with a slight sneer on his well-cut lip.

"And he wishes his son and heir to aid him in that laudable design, instead of spending his time making love in Paris?"

"Yes; he has obtained for me the post of lieutenant in the British army, he says."

"Which you will, of course, accept?" said the younger of the two, with a peculiar smile, as he lit a cigar, and blew a whiff of smoke from the corner of his mouth.

"Which I most decidedly will not!" replied Fred, coolly.

"And why, may I ask?"

"Why? What a question for you to ask, Gus! Am I not an American by birth—an American in heart and soul—a thousand times prouder of the glorious land in which I was born than of my father's broad acres in merrie England? Why? I tell you, Gus Elliott, I will join the ranks of my countrymen, and fight and conquer or die with them in defense of their cause!"

He stood erect, while his eagle eye flashed, and his dark cheek glowed with the enthusiasm with which he spoke.

Gus stood regarding him with something like admiration struggling through his usual look of careless indifference.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "I call that pretty strong language for the son of such a stanch royalist as Sir William Stanley. What do you suppose your honored father will say when he sees his son turn rebel?"

"Doubtless," said Fred, quietly, "as a

will be in a towering passion, and rather amazed that any one should presume to disobey his commands. I have long known it must, sooner or later, come to this. When this war first commenced how often has my blood boiled with impotent rage, listening to the insults and sneers of him and his tory friends on the 'rebel Yankees,' as they contemptuously called them. How I did long, then, to leave England and fly to my native land, to aid her sons in their brave struggles for independence! I would have done so, but I shrank from the storm of passion which I knew must follow it. When my father left England to join his Britannic Majesty's army in America, I left for Paris, lest he should desire me to follow him, and thus hasten a disclosure of our opposite sentiments. Three weeks ago I received his command to join him instantly. It seems some rumor of my true sentiments has reached him; and, indignant that any one should presume to question the loyalty of a son of his, he desires me to vindicate my allegiance to his gracious Majesty, and wipe off such a stain on his name by immediately accepting the post he has obtained for me in the army. Any further concealment is, of course, out of the question, and I thank Heaven it is so; for it seems to me a craven act in any one to remain an idle spectator while his native land, in her struggles for freedom, calls all her sons to her aid."

He leaned his head on his hand, and gazed thoughtfully on the bright waves below.

"For myself," said Gus, who had been deeply impressed by Fred's earnestness, "I always sympathized with the Colonies, but it was merely the natural feeling which all must experience when they see a band of brave men struggling for freedom. As in your case, America is the land of my birth; but, up to the present, I have been absent from it so long that I had almost ceased to regard it as such. Now, however, my feelings are changed. Together, Fred, we will fight the battles of our native land; every arm that will lift itself in her defense is needed now."

"Your sentiments do you honor, my dear Gus; but, as you asked me before, what will your friends say?"

"Oh! I have no friends worth mentioning," replied Gus, resuming his former indifferent tone. "I am an orphan, you know, with a bank-stock sufficient for all my wants, with no relations that I know of except an uncle in America, whom I have not seen these ten years. And I tell you what," he added, with a sudden animation, "he has two confoundedly pretty daughters—especially the younger. I used to be desperately in love with Nell, as a boy."

"Indeed," said Fred, smiling, "and who is this uncle of yours?—a Tory, no doubt."

"You had better believe it!" said Gus. "Major Percival hates the rebels as he hates Old Harry. Of course, I'll be disowned when he hears what I've done. Every one has his own peculiar hobby: and pride of birth is Major Percival's. If you were only to hear him, Fred. He dates his descent back to the days of Noah, and a good deal further; for some of his ancestors, I believe, were drowned in the flood. His lady, too, Mrs. Percival, is the granddaughter of a lord; so you see the major has some foundation for his family pride. He's as rich as Croesus, too."

"And Miss Nell, I suppose, is heiress to his wealth?"

"Not she, faith. Major Percival has a son and daughter beside; Nell's the youngest. You ought to know Nugent Percival; he's a glorious fellow, and no mistake—about your age, too, I should think."

"I may see them all yet—who knows?" said Fred. "I wish this voyage were over. I long to see my father and tell him all, and join the patriot army of Washington."

"You told me you were born in America," said Gus, after a pause. "I thought Lady Stanley was an Englishwoman, and had never crossed the Atlantic ocean in her life.

"The Lady Stanley you knew was not my mother," said Fred, coldly.

"She was not! That's something I never heard before," exclaimed Gus, in unbounded surprise.

"It's none the less true on that account," replied Fred, while a slight flush crimsoned his dark cheek. "My mother was an American born; she lived, died, and was buried in that land."

"Well, now, that's odd," said Gus, puffing meditatively on his cigar. "Come, Fred, make a clean breast of it; I made an open confession to you; and one good turn, you know, deserves another."

The young man smiled slightly, and then his face grew serious—almost sad.

"Very few know my history," he said, with a half sigh, "but with you, my dear Gus, I know I may speak freely. Many years ago, when my father was a young man, business or pleasure—I know not which—called him to America. While there he made the acquaintance of a young girl far beneath him in wealth and rank, but his equal in education, and his superior in moral worth. Bewildered by her beauty, he forgot their different degrees of rank, and the young girl became his wife. His marriage was kept a secret from his proud friends in England, and Sir William knew that there was little fear of their ever discovering it, for prudence had not been

forgotten by love, and he had wooed and won her under an assumed name. My mother never dreamed her husband was aught but one of her own station, and it was my father's aim not to undeceive her."

"It was a confoundedly mean trick!" interrupted Gus, indignantly.

"When I was about nine years old," continued Fred, unmindful of his words, "my father started for England, as he said, on business. As he was frequently in the habit of doing so, my mother was not surprised; but her husband had by this time outgrown his love for her, and when, five months after, he returned, it was as the husband of another."

Gus was again about to make a passing remark on Sir William's conduct, but suddenly checking himself, he sank back in silence.

"He told her all," went on Fred, with stern briefness; "his rank, his title; told her he was the husband of another, and that she must no longer consider herself his wife. He said he had come for me, to take me with him to England; that I was his son, and should be educated as became a Stanley. My poor mother shrieked and clung to me, but I was forcibly torn from her arms. They said she fell to the ground like one dead, and from that hour never spoke again. One week after, she was laid in her grave."

Fred paused, while the veins in his forehead grew dark, and his voice choked with suppressed emotion.

"But she was avenged," he continued, lifting his head, while his eyes flashed; "she had a brother, absent at the time, but, who, on his return, heard the story from the sexton who had buried my mother. His oath of vengeance was fearful, and fearfully kept. Five years passed away. Sir William and Lady Stanley had but one child, a daughter, whom they idolized. Leila was the gentlest and most beautiful creature I ever saw. Words cannot tell you, Gus, how I loved that child. One day, as the nurse was walking with her through the grounds of Stanley Park, a man, dressed in the rough garb of a sailor, sprang from behind the trees, and, in spite of the shrieks and struggles of the attendants, bore her off.

"The nurse, wild with terror, fled back to the house, and, meeting Sir William on the piazza, fell, fainting, at his feet. When she recovered, she related what had happened, and the consternation and horror her recital produced may be better imagined than described. There was no doubt in Sir William's mind as to who had done the deed. The abductor had left a message: 'Tell Sir Will Stanley,' said he, 'that my sister is avenged!' Search was made in every direction, enormous rewards were offered, the police were put on the track, but all in vain. Not the slightest clue to Leila could be obtained. It was the belief of every one that the sailor had destroyed the child to escape detection."

"It is more than probable," said Gus. "Poor Lady Stanley! I can now understand the cause of the strange melancholy that used to puzzle me so much."

"She never smiled from that day," said Fred. "Had the child died she would have grieved, but such grief is as nothing. It was the terrible uncertainty as to its fate that weighed on her heart. It was well she did not survive it long."

"And Sir William, how did he bear the loss?" inquired Gus.

"He became a changed man from that day. He grew stern, morose, and harsh to all. I have no doubt he felt it to be a just retribution for his conduct to his first wife, and this reflection rendered his remorse more bitter. Poor Leila! Dear little angel! Gus, I cannot tell you how I loved that child!"

He paced excitedly upon and down, and Gus saw there were tears in the deep, dark eyes of his friend.

"Yes, that's just the way I feel about Nell," said Gus, who really was in a desperate strait for something to say, and the deep sigh that accompanied his words seemed inexpressibly ludicrous.

In spite of himself, Fred laughed outright at his melancholy look, much to the disgust of Gus.

"On my honor, my dear fellow, you are smitten. I shouldn't wonder if you would be rash enough to take a wife next," said Fred.

"Rash! I think it's the most sensible thing a fellow could do. Don't you ever intend to marry, Fred?"

"Not I," said the other, carelessly, "as I said before, liberty or death for me. Why, Gus, the tyranny of King George is nothing to that of a wife. Don't you know what the French poet, Mauvause, says:

> 'I would advise a man to pause
> Before he takes a wife.
> Indeed, I own, I see no cause
> He should not pause for life.'"

"He must have been a crusty old bachelor who wrote that," remarked Gus; "as for me, I intend to make fierce love to Nell the moment I land. 'Pon my honor, I'd give a diamond ring to see that flinty heart of yours lying at the feet of some graceful little Yankee—metaphorically speaking, of course. They say, Fred, the American ladies are all pretty!"

"I doubt it."

"You're a stoic, a cynic, an unbeliever—an old Diogenes in his tub. You deserve to die an old bachelor. It's my firm and never-to-be-shaken belief that you have been jilted by some heartless

coquette, and for spite, now rail at the whole sex."

"I cry you mercy!" said Fred, as he laughingly ran his fingers through his luxuriant dark locks. "I am now, as I ever was, and always shall be, 'heart-whole, and fancy-free.' But I see," he added, drawing out his watch, "it is the hour

'When lapdogs give themselves the rousing shake,
And sleepy lovers just at twelve awake.'

So let us go below; the sable goddess of the cabin will presently announce dinner is ready."

And together the two young men strolled into the cabin.

CHAPTER II.

THE WRECK.

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on the wide, wide sea."

"I SAY, Jack, old fellow, it'll be doomsday before we reach Boston, at this rate," remarked Gus, some three hours after the conversation related above—as he, together with his friend, stood once more on the deck.

The pleasant breeze of the morning had passed away, and was succeeded by a dead calm. Not a breath of air rippled the surface of the deep; the sails lay flapping idly against the masts; the crew lay, gasping for breath, over the side of the ship. The sun, with its fiery, brassy glow, glared in the cloudless sky, loosening the very seams of the ship with the scorching heat, until everything looked parched and burning. The vessel lay motionless on the glittering sea, her masts and ropes reflected on the polished surface, as in a mirror. One could almost imagine her to be a painted ship on a painted ocean—so still, so lifeless, so sluggish was the calm.

The old tar addressed gave his trousers a hitch, turned an enormous quid of tobacco into the other cheek, and replied only by a dissatisfied growl.

"I'm fairly choking for breath," went on Gus, leaning over the bulwarks in a vain endeavor to catch a mouthful of air; "I wish to heaven a breeze would spring up."

"Humph!" grunted the old tar, as he discharged an enormous stream of tobacco juice over the side, "you'll have your wish before you sleep, youngster, or I'm mistaken."

"Well, I confess you're a better judge of the weather than I am, if you can see any sign of a breeze," said Gus. "By the look of things at present, I should conclude we might lie sweltering here for a month of Sundays."

"I've been on the ocean, man and boy, for thirty odd years, sir, and ought to know something of weather signs. If it doesn't blow great guns before the sun sets to-night, then you may call old Jack a good-for-nothing lubber—that's all."

"I vow I hope it may. This dog-trot rate of going is enough to provoke a Quaker to kick his grandmother. A stiff breeze will give us new life, and set things all right again," said Gus.

"Maybe so," said the old salt, rather doubtingly; "but, if I'm not mistaken, you'll wish yourself safe on land before you see the sun rise again."

"Faith! I wish I was there now," said Gus, with a yawn, "I never was born for a sailor, and never were the children of Israel more tired of their quarters in the desert than I am of this rascally old ark. Look out for your storm, Jack; and if you see it coming just let me know."

And Gus seated himself on the quarter rail, and leisurely lit a cigar.

An hour or two passed away in silence. The sun was setting, but the heat was still intense. Fred lay gazing idly into the ship's wake. Gus puffed away, and thought of Nell; but the heat had rendered both too languid to talk. Suddenly a hand was laid on his arm; and, looking up, Gus beheld old Jack.

"Look now, sir," said the old man, pointing to the sky. Absorbed in his own reflections, the young man had totally forgotten the prediction of the old sailor. As he glanced up at the sky, he involuntarily uttered an exclamation of surprise at the sight which met his eye.

As far as he could see, in every direction, a huge black pall of intense darkness covered the face of the heavens. A lurid, crimson line of fire in the west showed where the sun had sunk below the horizon, and was reflected like a thin stream of blood on the sea. Faint puffs of wind, from what quarter of the heavens no man could tell, at intervals sighed through the rigging, only to be followed by an ominous calm, more profound than before. The ship lay rolling heavily on the black, glassy billows, rising and falling like a dull, heavy log. A gloom like that of midnight was gathering over sea and sky—the dismal, ominous silence involuntarily made the boldest catch his breath quick and short, and filled each heart with a nameless awe, as they stood in silent expectation of what was to follow this dead calm of nature, as she paused to take breath before the hurricane of her wrath burst in its full force.

At this moment the clear, commanding voice of Captain Harden was heard giving orders to his men to reef the sails.

"We'll have a rousing gale to-night," said he, a few moments afterward, "or

I'm mistaken. I knew this dead calm didn't come for nothing. Ha! here it is! Down, men, down, and hold fast for your lives! The squall is upon us!"

Even as he spoke the black pall that hung over the sky seemed visibly lifted up, and a ghastly, whitish light lit up the heaving sea. A vivid flash of lightning blazed in the sky, followed by a crash of thunder that seemed to rend the very heavens in twain, accompanied by a flood of rain and a terrific gale of wind—and the hurricane burst upon them with tremendous force. For a moment the good ship tottered and quivered in every timber, as if trembling before her gigantic foe; then plunging suddenly downward like a maddened steed, she flew before the hurricane with the speed of the wind. On, on, on, with the spray dashing over the decks, and drenching to the skin the affrighted crew, she sped like a flash. The lightning blazed as though the whole heavens were one vast sheet of flame; the thunder crashed peal upon peal, as though the earth were rending asunder; the rain fell in vast floods of water; the wind shrieked and howled like a demon with impotent fury, and the bark plunged madly on, quivering, creaking, groaning and straining in every timber. The huge billows rose black and terrific, yawning as though to engulf them, the white foam gleaming dismal and ghastly in the spectral darkness, now and then shown in their appalling hugeness by the blinding glare of the lightning. The whole scene was inexpressibly grand and terrific—the most cowardly soul lost all sense of fear in the awful sublimity, the unspeakable grandeur of the elemental uproar.

Fortunately, the hurricane was not one of long duration. Ere an hour had passed the violence of the squall had greatly abated, but not before it had nearly dismantled the ship.

Fred Stanley stood clinging to a rope, gazing at the troubled sea and sky with a feeling of unspeakable awe that swallowed up every other feeling. His hat had blown off; his long, dark locks streamed wildly in the gale—his eyes were fixed, as if fascinated, on the gigantic billows, rising like huge mountains as if to overwhelm them.

His meditations were suddenly cut short by a hand being laid on his shoulder. With a start, he looked up, and beheld by the light of the binnacle-lamp the pale features of Gus Elliott.

"A wild night, my friend," said the youth; and although he spoke loudly, his voice sounded almost like a whisper amid the roar of wind and sea.

"A fearful storm, truly," was the reply, as Fred's eyes strove to pierce through the thick darkness.

"Would to heaven it were morning! This intense darkness is appalling. Could we see our danger I would not care, but in this fearful gloom the imagination pictures a thousand horrors, far worse than the most dreadful reality."

"It can be scarcely midnight yet," said Gus; "I see the clouds are breaking away in that direction. It will be light enough presently."

"Well, messmate, have my words come true?" said a voice at Gus' elbow, and, turning, both beheld old Jack.

"That they have," replied Gus; "and though I must give you credit for being a true prophet, upon my honor I wish to hear no more such predictions while I am on board the Mermaid."

"That won't be long, sir, or I'm mistaken," replied Jack, gloomily.

"What! Croaking again? I thought all danger was past," said the youth.

Jack shook his head despondingly.

"Come, my honest son of Neptune, out with it. What's in the wind, now?"

At this moment one of the crew shouted, in a voice of horror:

"The ship has sprung a leak! There's five feet of water in the hold."

"All hands to the pumps!" called the calm, trumpet-like tones of the captain.

The eyes of Gus and the old sailor met.

"I knew how it would be," said the old tar, shaking his head mournfully. "I had a presentiment last night that not a soul on board the Mermaid would live to see the sun rise again."

As he spoke he hurried forward; but not until Gus had fairly started back at sight of the ghastly look on his face, as it was revealed by the dim light of the binnacle-lamp. The youth turned uneasily away, and encountered the dark, earnest eyes of his friend.

"Pooh! nonsnse! what an old prophet of evil that is," said Gus, striving to shake off the feeling for which he could not account; "a raven could not croak more dismally than he."

"And yet I fear he is right," said Fred. "We are far from being out of danger. How this old dismantled hulk is plunging and staggering. Hark! what is that?"

It was the voice of one of the men who had been sent below, and who now came to announce that the water was rapidly rising.

The crew redoubled their efforts. Fred and Gus sprang to their aid and worked for their lives. But all was in vain; in spite of all their exertions, the hold was filling fast.

Suddenly a voice full of horror was heard shouting:

"The ship is sinking!"

In an instant every arm dropped as if palsied, and every face blanched to the hue of death, and the silence of the grave reigned. Then the spell was broken

en, and with a wild cry they sprang toward the boats.

"Are you mad, men?" shouted Captain Harden, as the crew rushed pell-mell to the side of the vessel.

But his words were in vain; the frightened wretches heard not, heeded not. Maddened by their selfish fears, they sprang into the boats, pushing one another fiercely aside in their cowardly haste.

"Those crowded boats will never live in this surf!" exclaimed Fred, in a voice that intense excitement had almost sunk to a whisper.

Even as he spoke, the nearest boat was lifted on the giant crest of a monster wave. For a moment it paused on its fearful height, quivering like a reed; the next, a wild shriek arose from the doomed crew and every soul was struggling in the hissing seas. The next moment to their inexpressible horror the other boat shared the same fate! One wild, agonized shriek of mortal horror arose high above the storm, and then all grew still. Engulfed beneath the hissing billows, they had sunk to rise no more.

Of all the numerous crew of the good ship Mermaid, those three stood alone now. Above, frowned the angry sky, black and ominous; beneath, raged the angrier ocean—the tops of the white billows gleaming like snow against the murky background. Around, was spread the dense, dark pall of night—an almost impenetrable wall of thick blackness. Boats and crew were alike gone. Alone they stood on the wide sea, in a sinking ship, with death staring them in every direction in the face.

The ominous words of the old sailor rushed to the mind of Gus: "Not a soul on board the mermaid would live to see the sun rise again!"

How true his words seemed likely to prove!

"We will soon follow them," said Gus, turning to the captain.

"God liveth!" was the solemn answer. "He holdeth the ocean in the hollow of His hand. Trust in Him!"

CHAPTER III.

SAVED.

"Rise! for the day is breaking,
Though the dull night be long!
Rise! God is not forsaking
Thy heart—be strong—be strong."
—C. H. J.

FOR a few moments the survivors of the wreck stood silent. With death staring them in the face, men are not inclined to be loquacious. Each one inwardly commended his soul to his Maker, and strove to nerve himself to meet his doom fearlessly.

"And can we not even make an effort to save our lives?" said Fred, at last. "Must we die without one attempt to escape the doom which threatens us?"

"While there is life there is hope," said the captain. "Ha!" he exclaimed, as if suddenly struck by a new thought, "here are plenty of loose spars and ropes; why not make a raft?"

"This old hulk will go to the bottom before it is half constructed," said Gus.

"It is worth a trial, however," said his friend, springing up with new hope. "Let us not lose time. Every second is precious."

Men working for their lives need little urging. In less than an hour a sufficient number of spars were lashed together to make a tolerably safe raft.

Captain Harden went below to discover how much longer they might stay on the wreck in safety.

Turning to his friend, Gus said, as he touched the raft with his foot:

"A desperate venture, Fred, to trust our lives on these few crazy planks, on the wide Atlantic. I fear, my dear friend, the patriot army of Washington will be deprived of two recruits this time."

"Desperate, certainly," said Fred, thoughtfully, "yet I feel a sort of presentiment that our end is not so near."

"Would I could think so, too," said Gus, striving to discover some sign of hope in the threatening scene around. "I cannot but recall the ominous words of that old sailor. They are continually recurring to my mind."

"To the raft! To the raft, for our lives!" shouted Captain Harden, as he rushed on deck, "the ship is sinking!"

Even as he spoke, she began plunging to and fro like a frightened steed.

In a moment they had flung their raft over the side, and had leaped from the deck.

They were not a moment too soon. The doomed ship, after a few mad struggles, began rapidly to settle in the water. The waves seemed lashed into fury, and the giant crest of each huge billow swept the dismantled deck. Suddenly she was whirled round and round by some impetuous force, then, rising almost perpendicularly, she plunged down, stern foremost. In the enormous whirlpool thus formed, they almost imagined they could see the bottom, so great was its force, that although they were at some distance, they held their breath for a moment in involuntary terror as they were rapidly swept toward the hissing vortex. But the waves again closed over her, and every sign of life vanished from the horizon.

"There perished as noble a bark as ever braved the blue Atlantic!" said Captain Harden, dashing the spray from his eyes.

There was no reply; for his companions were lost in thought. How inexpressibly dreary and desolate was all around. Alone on the wide ocean, on a frail raft, that threatened each moment to go to pieces under them by the violence of the waves. The cold spray, drenching them to the skin, benumbed them with cold; a dull lethargy was creeping over them when Captain Harden, who noticed with alarm how frail the raft was, suddenly said:

"Let us try to make this raft of ours a little tighter. It threatens now to go to pieces every moment. Work will keep us warm, too; this cold spray is enough to freeze a man."

The exertion produced the desired effect, and they soon had the pleasure of finding their float much more secure than before. How long the hours seemed that must intervene until morning! As the night slowly wore on, the storm seemed to die away, the waves subsided, and the wind sank to a light breeze. The clouds of night sullenly rolled away before the white wand of morning. Far in the east, the sky and sea were blushing scarlet before the coming of the sun. Up he rose in fiery radiance, glowing and golden, in a canopy of purple, crimson and blue. Not a cloud obscured the clear blue vault of heaven, that a few hours before had shot forth forked lightning and deafening peals of thunder. Their frail raft rose and fell gaily on the sparkling waves, that the night before had loomed up so dark and frightful. Calm and peaceful the blue sea looked, as though hundreds of brave hearts, that fearful night, had not perished forever beneath.

"What a change a few hours has made!" said Fred, as the light, cool breeze lifted gently the dark hair off his feverish brow; "last night, all was wild and dark, and tempestuous; this morning, everything breathes peace and beauty. Sunrise on the ocean! was there ever anything more glorious?"

"A sailor's luck, Mr. Stanley," said Captain Harden, shaking the spray from his hair; "a short time ago we were shivering with the cold, and in two hours hence we will be sweltering in the rays of a sun hot enough to roast an African."

"Do you think there is any chance of our being picked up before night, captain?" inquired Gus.

"Can't say, sir. I trust so, however. There are always ships cruising about in these latitudes."

The day wore on; and, as the sun approached the meridian, the heat grew almost intolerable. Without shelter to ward off the burning rays of an almost tropical sun, they sank down overpowered and utterly exhausted. Thirst, too, began to torment them, and the consciousness that they were without means to allay it added to their suffering. Too languid even to converse, they sat in dreary silence, their eyes fixed on the boundless expanse of sky and ocean.

Slowly the sun began to sink in the west, and the conviction that they must pass another night where they were, added anything but comfort to their situation.

When the glorious sunlight of the following morning fell on them, it found them parched with thirst, and lying utterly exhausted on the miserable float. Fred and Captain Harden still bore up; but the fiery flush on the cheek of Gus, and the wild light in his eye, showed the fever that was burning within.

As the morning passed, and noon approached, he grew delirious. He raved wildly, and more than once it required the united strength of his friends to prevent him from plunging bodily into the deep.

"Would to Heaven aid would come!" said Captain Harden, with deep anxiety, as his eye fell on the delirious youth. "Poor boy! I do not wonder he has sunk beneath this trial. He is little inured to the hardships and privations of a sailor's life."

"What is that?" said Fred, who had an eye like a hawk; "there is a vessel bearing down directly toward us. Look! Look!"

"By heaven, yes!" exclaimed the captain; "let us display our flag. Ha! they see us! There goes their signal!"

"Saved, Gus! Saved, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Fred, seizing his hand, hot and burning, in both his.

"Saved! Saved! I knew we would be! Hurrah!" he shouted, with wild incoherence, as he endeavored to spring to his feet—but, weak and exhausted, he fell back in the arms of his friend.

The vessel proved to be an American privateer. In half an hour the friends were on board, where every kindness that could be required was generously bestowed upon them; and poor Gus was resigned to the care of an experienced surgeon—who, to the great joy of Fred, affirmed that in a few days he would be out of danger.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BURNING SHIP.

"Great God! the sights that I have seen
When far upon the main,
I'd rather that my death had been
Than see those sights again."
—Landon.

"YOURS was a narrow escape, Mr. Stanley," said Captain Dale, the commander of the privateer, as, about a week after their deliverance, Fred made his appearance on deck.

Gus was there, too, looking rather

pale, but perfectly restored both to health and spirits.

"Yes, sir," replied Fred; "and, though I have been as near death in many shapes before, I never felt it so horrible as when, wild with thirst, I stood expecting it on that frail raft on the broad Atlantic."

"And your friend," said the captain, smiling, "was in still worse condition when we providentially came across you."

"Egad!" exclaimed Gus, "it came near doing for me. I'll never undertake to sail across the Atlantic on a raft again, if I can help it; at least, not without a beaker of fresh water on board."

"What is your destination now, captain?" inquired Fred.

"Boston; but I mean to capture, if possible, a few Britishers first, to make time pass pleasantly."

"Boston? We're in luck, Fred," observed Gus. "So," he added to the captain, "you sometimes have a skirmish with the British, do you?"

"Yes," replied Dale; "it's only last week I sent a sloop-of-war to Davy Jones; and, with the help of the Lord, and that long Tom there, I trust speedily to send some more of their brethren to look after them."

"Sail ho!" called the shrill tones of the lookout at this moment.

"Where away?" demanded Captain Dale, as he seized a glass, and sprang into the rigging.

"Due east, sir."

"And an Englishman, by Jupiter!" exclaimed the captain, as he again leaped on the deck. "There's something wrong on board of her, too," he continued, "for the crew are running wildly about the deck, sometimes rushing in a body below, and again reappearing. Can the crew have mutinied?"

Again he gazed long and steadfastly at the vessel.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "the ship's on fire."

"By Jove, so it is," said Fred; and, even as he spoke, a sudden jet of flame shot up the hatchway of the ship.

"And there goes a signal of distress," shouted Gus, as a white pennant suddenly streamed out in the breeze from the masthead.

"See how the poor wretches are crowding together," exclaimed the captain; "we must not let them perish before our eyes. Who will volunteer to go to the rescue?"

As if by one impulse, men and officers all sprang forward to offer their services.

"No, no," said Captain Dale, goodhumoredly, "I cannot let you all go. Here, Mr. Stewart," addressing his first lieutenant, "you will take command of one boat, and—ah! Mr. Stanley, I see by your eager look how anxious you are to lend assistance. Well, you can take charge of the other boat; and," he added, lowering his voice, "look out for the magazine. Now, be off, and God speed you."

"Ay, ay, sir," came cheerily from a score of lips, as the hardy seamen bent to their oars.

"Give way, my lads!" cried Fred, as he sprang into the stern-sheets and waved his cap in the air.

The men bent to their oars with a will, and the boat cut like a sea-gull through the waters. Fred still stood with his eyes fixed on the burning ship—his handsome face all aglow with excitement.

The scene was inexpressibly grand and terrific. The flames were now bursting out from every part of the ship; while a dark, dense cloud of sulphurous smoke clouded the blue sky above. The fiery monster ran up the shrouds and rigging, twining its fierce tongue around the masts; while occasionally the sullen booming of a gun would float over the waters, as her armament, heated by the flames, went off. The affrighted crew were huddled together—by their frantic gestures and wild signs striving to urge the boats still faster on, as they beheld the flames rapidly approaching the spot where they stood.

"Give way, my men! give way! Will you see them perish miserably before your eyes?" shouted Fred, his dark eyes blazing with excitement as he beheld the fiery-tongued monster almost within a few feet of the unhappy wretches, whose shrieks of terror came piercingly to their ears.

The sailors bent their brawny arms to the task, until, in less than ten minutes more, they were within a few yards of the burning ship.

"Leap into the water and we will pick you up!" shouted Fred, fearing lest, if they approached too near, the boats might swamp from the numbers crowding in.

Without a moment's hesitation, the command was obeyed; and the crews of both boats were soon busily employed in rescuing.

"Is that all?" asked Fred, as the last were picked up.

"No, sir; it's not all!" said a boy—a mere lad of fourteen—springing from his seat. "There's a lady aboard yet; she is in the cabin and we forgot her."

"Great heaven!" exclaimed Fred; quickly turning to his own men, he said: "My brave lads, I cannot leave a woman to perish in that burning ship. I am going on board to rescue her. You will, in the mean time, keep at some distance off, and when I appear on deck, return for me. Should you not see me again" (he paused for a moment) "you will return to the privateer and tell Cap-

tain Dale I have striven to do my duty. That will do. Stand off, and wait for me."

He caught a rope that hung over the vessel's side, and sprang to the burning deck.

To his inexpressible joy he saw that the flames had not yet reached the cabin. He dashed down the stairs, and paused for a moment to glance around.

The walls were a dark, polished oak, the floor covered with a rich Turkey carpet, whose brilliant hues were bright as the gorgeous plumage of a hummingbird. The chairs and lounges, profusely scattered around, were of dark, carved wood—old and quaint in appearance, and cushioned with dark blue velvet. A guitar lay in a corner, and carelessly scattered by it were several sheets of music. A bookcase, filled with a choice selection of books, stood in one corner, and, lying half open on the table, as if it had just been dropped, was a small, elegantly bound volume of Milton. By it lay a tiny gold locket, containing a miniature. Not doubting that this belonged to the occupant of the cabin, Fred snatched it up, thinking she might value it, and turned to look for its owner.

The door of an adjoining stateroom was half open. It was no time for idle ceremony. Without a moment's hesitation he dashed it open and entered.

A young girl, transcendently lovely, was kneeling in the middle of the floor. Her snowy robes fell in spotless folds around her exquisite form; the long, silken tresses fell like a shower of rippling sunbeams over her pearly shoulders. The small white hands were clasped over the stainless bosom, that rose and fell with her soft breathing. Every trace of color had faded from that fair face, leaving cheek and brow as white as monumental marble. The large blue eyes, calm and cloudless as mountain lakes, looked from beneath the golden lashes, calm and serene.

Stepping before her, he said, hurriedly:

"Madam, everything is in flames around you! Come with me, or you will be lost."

At the sound of his voice she sprang to her feet, and, with a wild cry of "Saved! Saved!" she threw up both snowy arms, and would have fallen fainting to the floor, had he not caught her in his embrace.

Snatching a quilt from the bed, he wrapped it round her slight form and rushed from the cabin. To his unspeakable horror, as he sprang with one bound up the stairway, he found the whole deck had now become one vast sheet of flame. There was no time to lose. Springing like a wounded panther, he cleared the deck with two bounds, and leaped clean over the side into the sea.

A wild cheer arose from the crew of the boat at the sight. Propelled by strong arms and willing hearts, in a moment it was by his side and in another he stood among them, with his still insensible burden in his arms.

"Pull, men! Pull, for the love of God!" he shouted, waving his hand in the air. "You work for your lives."

Like straws the strong oars bent in the brawny hands of the rowers, and like an arrow sped from a bow, the boat shot out from the burning ship.

One moment more, and it would have been too late. With a roar that seemed to rend heaven and earth, the magazine exploded, and the ill-fated ship was blown to atoms. Like a shower of hail, the burning spars and timbers fell all around them. But they were almost miraculously saved; the boat escaped uninjured, and in ten minutes was entirely out of danger.

Every one drew a deep breath, and from the most callous and hardened heart present went up a prayer of thanksgiving for their unexpected deliverance from death.

Fred seated himself, and, throwing off the quilt in which he had wrapped the young girl, began to chafe her cold hands and temples.

"Had this young lady no friends on board, that she was thus forgotten?" he asked, turning to one of the crew of the Englishman.

"No, sir; not when the vessel caught fire. She was returning from England with her uncle, and one stormy night, about a week ago, he was washed overboard and lost. She never came up to the deck after that, and in the hurry and fright, when the ship was found to be on fire, we forgot all about her."

"Is she an American?" asked Fred, looking, with a feeling for which he could not account, on the fair face and graceful form lying so still and lifeless in his arms.

"Don't know, I'm sure," replied the man.

All Fred's efforts to restore her to consciousness were in vain. She lay, in her snowy drapery, so still, that he almost feared life was extinct. A snow-wreath was not more white than the colorless face, off which the bright hair fell over the young man's arm, on which the head reclined. The tiny hands imprisoned in his were cold and lifeless as marble.

With a feeling of intense joy, Fred sprang once more upon the deck of the privateer, and resigned the fainting girl to the hands of the surgeon, and then hastened to exchange his wet clothes for dry ones. Gus, who had arrived in the other boat a few moments before, listened with envy and amazement to his friend's story.

"Well, luck is everything!" he exclaimed.

claimed, with a sigh, when his friend had concluded; "if every ship in the British navy were to take fire I don't believe I'd have the good fortune to save a single young lady from a scorching, while you're not well out, when you return with an angel in your arms, wringing wet, and never look any more elated by it than if you were a man of stone. Oh, Fortune! Fortune! thou fickle goddess, if you would only throw such chances in my way as is thrown in the path of this stony-hearted cynic, believe me, I would be far from proving so ungrateful."

"A very good speech for an extempore one," observed Fred, as he coolly lighted a cigar. "And, by the way, here is the doctor; I must ask him how his fair patient is."

"Hech! mon, dinna fash yersel' aboot her, the young leddy is doin' verra weel," observed Sawney; "an', fegs, ye ne'er seen sic'n beautiful roses in a' yer life as cam in her cheek when I tauld her aboot the canny chiel that plucked her, as it were, a brand frae the burnin'. Hoot! Mr. Stanley, ne'er try to look sae dignified, d'ye think I dinna see the smile in yer black e'e? If ye're no proud o' savin' the life o' sic a handsome leddy, ye dinna deserve to hear the message she has sent ye."

"A message for me!" exclaimed Fred, with an impetuosity that brought a sudden crimson to his dark cheek.

"Aye, mon! a message to ye, deil a less. And what for wudna she? Did ye no save her life?"

"But the message! the message!" exclaimed Fred, impatiently.

"Oo! Ay! the message! jist sae! 'Tell him,' says she, an', soul o' me! she lookit sae bonnie wi' her blue e'e and her kowden locks as she said it, that I'd gi'en a hunder' pounds to hae been ye at the time."

"But the message! the message! the message!" cried Fred, losing all patience.

"And she looked handsome, did she?" inquired Gus, as he noticed the impatience of his friend.

"Hech! ye may say that, laddie. De'il a bonnier lass ivir I clapt my ain twa een on. An' a doot if she winna load him wi' compliments when he ca's to see her, judgin' frae the message. I'm mair nor half sartin that"—

"But," shouted Fred, in his irritation seizing the doctor by the shoulder and wheeling him round like a top, "what was the message, you old son of Galen?"

"Hech, sirs! Laird protect us! who ivir heerd mair nor that?" gasped the little doctor, panting for breath, which his extempore waltz had nearly shaken out of his body, "spinnin' a respectable auld body lek me roun' as if I was a tap. 'Twad na be every laddie wad dae sic a dirty trick. Hech! I'm fairly oot o' breath."

"It's excessively aggravating, no doubt," said Gus, soothingly; "but you must pardon my unhappy young friend here; he is a little flighty at times, but perfectly harmless"—

Fred groaned.

"But when very impatient," continued Gus, secretly enjoying his friend's despair, he is rather violent. Therefore, my dear doctor, you had better tell him the young lady's message—when, I have no doubt, these alarming symptoms will vanish."

"Oo ay! just so!" said the doctor, retreating a few paces from Fred, and eyeing him as one might a half-tamed tiger, "she said that ony time this afternoon that wad be convenient she wad be maist happy to see ye in the kebbin below. That's a'."

And the little doctor went off muttering, "Gude purtect us! wha wad think sic a douce young laddie as that was nae richt aboot the upper warks? Weel, weel, Laird save us!"

"An interview!" exclaimed Gus, with delight; "by Jove! Fred, you are in luck. I can foresee it all—private interview—lady all blushes and gratitude—gentleman all admiration and compliments—see each other every day while on board—grow as thick as pickpockets—moonlight interview—gentleman grows tender—lady refers him to papa—papa informs him she's not his daughter at all, but a princess in disguise, with large estates in a land yet undiscovered—matrimony—champagne, ice-creams, wax lights, roses, pretty girls' kisses—bride, an angel without wings—bridegroom in the seventh heaven—whew! there's the whole thing in a nutshell. A novel condensed."

Fred bit the end of his cigar to conceal a smile.

"I'd give a trifle to know her name," continued Gus; "it's a wonder none of the crew of the vessel knew it. Heigho! I suppose I must restrain my impatience until after the interview she has promised you."

Fred, though appearing outwardly indifferent, felt little less anxiety for the interview than his friend.

Having made himself very unnecessarily handsome by a most careful toilet, he desired the little doctor to inform the lady he was ready to wait upon her.

"Walk doon! walk doon, laddie," said Galen, presently reappearing; "and for the love o' heaven!" he added, suddenly remembering Fred's conduct in the morning, "dinna be ony way violent. Laird save me! what wad the puir lassie do if ye took ane o' thaim tantrums in her presence?"

Fred, having pledged his word to conduct himself, while before the lady, with

due decorum, the doctor bowed him into the cabin, which the captain had generously given up to his fair captive, and, having announced him as being "the laddie that had ta'en her oot o' the burnin' ship," made his best salute and retired.

The lady, who was seated by the table, arose as Fred entered, and, advancing toward him, extended her hand. The youth imagined she looked even fairer now than when he had first seen her. The bright, golden tresses were pushed off her fair brow and gathered into a burnished knot behind, thus displaying the exquisite symmetry of the superb little head. She was still pale from the effects of her recent fright; but Fred thought he had never beheld a fairer face in all his life.

"My preserver! how can I ever thank you for saving me from such a fearful death?" said the softest, sweetest voice in the world. And, raising the hand she held in hers, she bent her graceful head and pressed it to her lips.

The act, simple and natural as it was, brought a sudden flush to Fred's face.

"I need no thanks, fairest lady, for performing a common act of humanity," he said, bowing. "He would, indeed, be a monster who would not endeavor to rescue a fellow-creature from death."

"Oh! it was fearful!" exclaimed the lady, "to stay there alone, expecting momentary death. It seemed to me impossible I could be saved, with everything in flames around me!"

She shuddered at the remembrance, and her face grew a shade paler.

"It seems wonderful to me how you could have been forgotten by all," said Fred.

"So it seemed to me at first, but not now. I never went on deck after the death of my dear uncle"—she paused and her eyes filled with tears—"he was lost in a dreadful storm, a week before you rescued me. Alas! this seems doomed to be a luckless voyage."

"I fear you will not like your quarters here," said Fred, glancing around the narrow and poorly furnished cabin, "it is hardly in a fit condition for the reception of a lady."

"Oh, if that were all," she said, with a half sigh, "but I am afraid it will be such a long time before I can reach home."

"I, too, have l nged for the end of this voyage," said Fred, "but now the time will appear all too short."

She looked up suddenly, to find the deep, dark eyes of the speaker fixed upon her with a look of profound admiration. For a moment the golden lashes dropped over the blue eyes, and a vivid crimson, whether of anger or embarrassment, he knew not, mantled her pale cheeks.

Her manner during the remainder of the interview was so cold and constrained that he felt sure he had offended, and, with a feeling of vexation, he arose and took his leave.

Fred's dreams that night were haunted by a pair of blue eyes that one moment smiled upon him—the next were turned coldly away. Once again, in fancy, he was rescuing their owner from the flames and bearing her off in triumph in his arms, when he awoke to the dull reality that he was clasping, most affectionately, the pillow!

As he dressed before going on deck he suddenly remembered he had neglected to ask the young lady her name. Was there ever such stupidity? Then it occurred to him that he had a locket belonging to her, and, opening it, he discovered that it contained the miniature of the fair unknown herself.

Now, Mr. Stanley, though by no means given in general to retaining other people's property, immediately experienced a most felonious desire to keep the locket. Accordingly, placing it as near his heart as was convenient, he hastily added a few finishing touches to his costume and went on deck.

And when he had reached it a sight met his eyes that transfixed him with amazement. For there, promenading the deck and leaning most affectionately on the arm of Gus, was the fair unknown. The morning breeze had brought a deep rose hue to the pearly cheeks; her eyes were bright with pleasure, and smiles were chasing the dimples over her fair, sunshine face. And there was Gus, bending over her in a way for which Fred could have shot him without remorse and calling up her smiles and blushes at his own magnetic will.

No wonder Fred was amazed, angry, mortified. He had saved her life almost at the risk of his own, and because he had uttered a few gallant words she had grown as distantly reserved and dignified as a queen on her throne. And here was Gus Elliott, whom she had never seen before, now her elected champion, and, to judge by appearances, something more than a friend.

As they passed, both looked up and recognized him, she by a formal bow and Gus by a smile of triumph. With the air of an insulted prince, Fred turned aside and strolled in an opposite direction, with the firm conviction that there was nothing in the world but ingratitude.

While he still stood absorbed in gloomy thought he was suddenly aroused by a hearty slap on the shoulder. He looked up haughtily and Gus met the full light of his fiery eye.

"Fred!" he exclaimed, without heeding his evident anger, "you're the luckiest dog in creation! Guess whom you've saved?"

"Whom?" was the eager inquiry.

ed

"My cousin Edith, the eldest daughter of my uncle, Major Percival!"

CHAPTER V.

THE HOME OF EDITH.

"Where is the heart that hath not bowed
A slave, eternal love, to thee?
Look on the cold, the gay, the proud—
And is there one among them free?"
—Landon.

It was a dark, unpleasant night—nearly a fortnight after the adventure of the burning ship. The privateer was still cruising about in quest of "Britishers," whom the captain was particularly anxious to "send to thunder!"—as he himself elegantly expressed it. During this time Fred's acquaintance with Miss Percival hardly progressed as rapidly as Gus had prophesied it would. There was a sort of embarrassment, a coldness, a reserve, in her manner toward him that offended his sensitive pride, and their intercourse now generally consisted of a bow, when they met, and a formal "good day." Though she spent the greater part of each day with Gus on deck, she seemed to shrink from meeting Fred, and Fred, seeing this, studiously avoided her. Yet sometimes, suddenly raising his head, he would find those soft blue eyes wandering wistfully over to where he stood, yet always dropping before his, while her rising color and averted head betokened emotions she would fain have concealed.

Wrapped in his cloak, with his hat drawn down over his brows, Fred paced up and down the deck in no very amiable frame of mind. It was a dense, gloomy night. The storm clouds were drifting, dark and threatening, over the leaden sky; a chill, raw wind was blowing piercingly cold—sighing, dirge-like, through the rigging, while the creaking of the cordage seemed to chant back a sort of dismal refrain; a thick rain was falling, making everything wet and uncomfortable. It was indeed suicidal weather, but perfectly congenial to the thoughts passing through the mind of the tall, cloaked figure pacing so restlessly to and fro.

At times sounds of song and peals of laughter would come floating up from the cabin, where old Doctor Kirk, Captain Harden, Gus and Miss Percival were assembled. These sounds were to Fred's feelings like "vinegar upon nitre," and his lip curled scornfully and bitterly whenever he passed. Suddenly the mention of his own name arrested his steps. Some secret power held him, as it were, forcibly to the spot, to listen.

"Where's Stanley?" inquired Captain Harden.

"Keeping sentry on deck, no doubt," answered Gus, "according to his usual custom. I'll wager a guinea that quick, excited tread we heard a moment ago was Fred walking up and down."

"Maister Stanley's a queer sort o' lad," observed the doctor. "I ne'er cam across ane sae proud in a' my days. T'ither day he was stannin' lookin', sae dooer and sulky, by himsel', that I didna think hem well, and I recommended a doze o' peells. Well, instead o' thankin' me, as a body ought, he glowered at me a minute, as if he thought me mad, and walked off wi' himsel' without sayin' a word. Hech, sirs! deil a more thanks I got!"

Gus couldn't help laughing, but he observed:

"Oh, you must excuse him, doctor! Fred has some queer notions; but in general he's a capital fellow—brave as a lion, but proud as Lucifer."

"What is your opinion, Miss Percival, of the gentleman now under discussion?" inquired Captain Harden.

Oh, what would not Fred have given to hear the reply! Miss Percival's low, musical voice had hitherto possessed an unspeakable charm for him; but now he would not have objected had it been as loud as the boatswain's, so that he might have heard the answer; but, though he strained every nerve to listen, he could not catch her words.

"That's just like Edith," observed Gus. "Hasn't 'formed an opinion,' indeed! As if any young lady could meet such a good-looking fellow as Fred without forming an opinion about him. He reminds me wonderfully of the old woman in the song." And Gus drawled, in a sing-song tone:

"There was an old woman—and what do you think?
She lived upon nothing but victuals and drink—
Victuals and drink was the whole of her diet—
And yet this old woman could never be quiet."

If Gus had seen the fiery flash of Fred's eye at that moment he might have hesitated a little about the comparison.

"I dinna see how Maister Stanley's like that auld wumman," said the doctor, solemnly.

"Why, my dear doctor, it's as clear as mud," said Gus. "Fred, like the old lady in the rhyme, 'never is quiet.' It's a perfect martyrdom to a serious person like myself to be with one as restless as an uneasy conscience, and as fiery as one of your own Scotch Douglases."

Fred had not waited to hear this explanation; but, wrapping himself more closely in his cloak, resumed his solitary march up and down—the loud mirth and laughter from the cabin, amid which at times he could recognize the silvery

voice of Edith—giving added bitterness to his thoughts. Poor Fred! Like the country swain in love, he felt "hot and dry-like, with a pain in his side like;" and, like every other young gentleman when he first falls in love, tormenting himself with a thousand imaginary evils—until, as Gus phrased it, there was "no standing him."

Upon their arrival in Boston Fred would have started immediately to see his father, but Gus, who was to accompany Edith home, urged him to go with them. And Edith pleaded, too — more with her eager, blushing face and eloquent eyes than with words.

"Do, Mr. Stanley," she urged, laying her little white hand on his own—"do come! Papa will be so anxious to see one who has saved his daughter's life."

Every nerve thrilled at that magnetic touch; but still he stood irresolute.

"Please, Mr. Stanley," continued that low, musical voice—to his ear the sweetest he had ever heard, and the starry eyes were raised to the face above her.

Fred looked down, to encounter those pleading, blue eyes raised so earnestly to his, and just as you would have done, my dear sir, had you been in his place, he surrendered.

The residence of Major Percival was several miles from the city, and after spending one night at a hotel the trio started next morning.

The drive to Percival Hall was always remembered by Fred among the happiest moments of his life. The cold reserve which Edith had always maintained on shipboard had entirely vanished. An almost childish glee at being once more at home had taken its place, and she chatted and laughed with a freedom and vivacity that completely finished poor Fred.

A sudden turn in the road brought them, at length, in sight of Percival Hall. An avenue of stately horse-chestnuts led up to the hall itself—an imposing looking structure of red brick. Behind the house was an extensive orchard, and, nearer still, a pretty flower garden.

"There's papa—there's papa!" exclaimed Edith, springing up and clapping her hands, and before Fred, who had risen, could assist her, she had leaped out, and flown into the arms of an elderly gentleman, who came humming carelessly down the steps in front of the mansion.

While the major, with many an exclamation of surprise and delight, embraced his daughter, Fred scrutinized him from head to foot.

In stature he was of about middle size, stout and squarely built, with prominent features and high cheek bones. There was an air of sternness and command about him, while the firmly closed mouth betrayed unusual obstinacy in following his own opinions. The high, broad forehead and massive head displayed a lofty intellect; and there was a piercing keenness in the gaze of his sharp, gray eyes that gave an observer the uncomfortable sensation that he was reading his inmost thoughts.

He now advanced toward the young man, who had alighted, and, holding out his hand to Fred, said, with grateful courtesy:

"My daughter tells me, sir, that you have saved her life. I am not in the habit of making fine speeches, but believe me, sir, the heartfelt gratitude of an old man will ever follow you."

Fred bowed in silence.

"And don't you know this young gentleman, papa?" said Edith, with an arch glance toward Gus.

"I have not that hon—eh?" he added, suddenly—"can it be? Bless my soul! Gus Elliott, is this yourself?" and the major seized his hand with a grip of iron.

"Well, sir," replied Gus, with a grimace, "if ever I had any doubts on the subject, the aching of my fingers at present has convinced me I am myself, and no mistake."

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed the major, surveying him from head to foot with sharp eyes, "how you have shot up since I saw you last! And you're Gus Elliott. Well, who'd have thought it? Edith! Ah! she has gone, I see. Walk up, gentlemen—walk up. Mrs. Percival will be delighted to see you."

So saying, Major Percival ran up the steps, followed by the two young men. The long hall was flanked by doors on either side, and, opening one of these, he ushered the twain into the family sitting-room. Here they found Edith clasped in the arms of a handsome middle-aged lady, while a young girl stood by her side, alternately laughing and crying.

"My wife and daughter Ellen, Mr. Stanley. I suppose," he added, smilingly, to his wife, "Edith has told you all about the achievements of this promising young gentleman. There, there—don't overwhelm him with thanks. I see by his countenance he doesn't like it! Come, Nell—why don't you thank your sister's deliverer?"

"Mamma won't give me a chance," replied Nell—a lively, dark-eyed girl, with pretty, restless features. "She has monopolized Mr. Stanley all to herself."

"Well, there; I'll resign him to you, saucebox," said Mrs. Percival, smiling, "though I imagine Mr. Stanley will soon tire of your everlasting chattering."

"Here is some one else you have not seen yet, Nell," said her sister, glancing at Gus, who now advanced.

"Why, can it—no, it—yes, it—why, I declare it's Gus!" exclaimed Nell, as she

darted forward and without ceremony flung her arms around his neck.

"Dear me! Ellen, that's shockingly improper conduct!" said the highly scandalized Mrs. Percival.

"Oh, ain't it nice!" exclaimed Nell, as she came dancing back, with cheeks and eyes all aglow. "We'll have such good times, now you and 'Dith have come back!"

"Where is Nugent, mamma?" inquired Edith.

"He went away with Ralph De Lisle, about a week ago, my dear," replied her mother. "We expect them both home again in a few days."

The name seemed to act like a galvanic shock on Edith, who gave a sudden start and flushed to the temples.

"And, oh, Edith!" exclaimed her voluble sister, "you ought to see Ralph since you left him to wear the willow. Poor fellow! he was such a victim to "green and yellow melancholy" for a week after that I couldn't bear to look at him. My! won't he be glad to hear you've come back—and so will I, too, for I do long for a wedding dreadfully."

"Ellen!" said her mother, reprovingly.

"Oh, well, mamma, there's nobody here that doesn't know all about it," said the chatterbox. "But, dear me! Mr. Stanley, ain't you well?—you look like a ghost!"

Edith, who had been gazing steadfastly out of the window, now turned suddenly round, and Fred started at seeing the deadly paleness of her face.

"Ring the bell, Edith, for a glass of water," said Nell. "Why, I declare you're as bad yourself," she added, suddenly confronting her. "Just look, mamma, how pale they both are! I'm afraid it's catching. Do I look pale?" And the serious expression of Nell, as she glanced at her own blooming face in the glass, was truly laughable.

But the color that had faded from the face of both speedily returned. The eyes of Fred and Edith met, and before that penetrating glance hers fell, while a vivid crimson mantled cheek and brow.

During the remainder of the evening the name of Ralph De Lisle was frequently mentioned by all save Edith, who seemed to shrink painfully from the subject. From what he heard, Fred judged De Lisle was a suitor for the hand of Edith—and what was more, a favored one.

When Fred retired that night it was with no very pleasant feelings. Who and what was this De Lisle? He asked himself the question repeatedly, without much hope of obtaining an answer. His resolution was to see Gus alone, and, if possible, obtain from him a discovery without exciting suspicion as to the state of his own feelings. If, as he feared, he was indeed beloved by her, then he himself would immediately depart and see her no more.

The next day an opportunity occurred. Fred and Gus found themselves separated from the others and straying arm in arm through the garden.

"Who is this Ralph De Lisle, about whom they all appear to be so anxious?" inquired Fred, with affected carelessness, unconscious that he was rooting up the violets with his cane.

"A suitor of Edith's, I believe," replied Gus, indifferently.

"Ah! and a favored one, if I may judge."

"Hum! I should think so—they're to be married in a few weeks."

There was no response from his companion, and Gus went on:

"The father of this De Lisle was a Frenchman, and the intimate friend of Major Percival. When dying he committed his son to his care, with a request that Edith and Ralph, who had always been firm friends, should be united, if they were willing, when his son attained his majority. Major Percival promised him that his request should be fulfilled, and his word with him is law unalterable. The young couple love each other, it seems, so their 'course of true love' runs smoothly enough. Edith wished to visit some friends of hers in England before she became Mrs. De Lisle, and she was returning home when you rescued her from the burning ship."

"Better, far better, I had left her to perish there!" was the bitter thought that passed through Fred's mind.

"De Lisle is an immense favorite with the major," continued Gus; "some say he appears fonder of him even than of his own son. He is the leader of a gang of Tories, and a Tory himself to the core of his heart. But here comes Nell—breezy and airy as ever."

"Oh, Mr. Stanley!" she exclaimed, as she came flying to him, "we are going to have a sailing party to-morrow, and you must be sure to come. So, if you have any engagement for that day, you may just break it at once."

"I regret it is impossible for me to comply," said Fred, gravely. "I must depart to-morrow."

"Depart for where?" demanded Gus, surprised at this sudden announcement.

"To see my father. I should have gone before, could I have broken the spell that bound me here!" and he bowed to Nell.

"Oh, nonsense, Mr. Stanley!" exclaimed that young lady. "You sha'n't go, and that's the end of it. Your father can wait a day or two very well. Sister, come here and persuade Mr. Stanley to stay. He's going away," he says.

"Going away!" echoed Edith, growing pale as she spoke.

"But we positively won't allow it, un-

til after to-morrow, at least—shall we, sister? Coax him, like a good girl, while I have a race with Carlo—he's pulling the dress off my back. You're such a good hand to persuade people, you know. I remember, when De Lisle used to be leaving, how you would coax him to stay. Come, Carlo!"

Again Edith started at the abrupt mention of that name, and the subdued light that had filled Fred's eye as he watched her changing face gave place to a look of cold determination. Gus urged him pressingly to remain, and Edith's eyes were raised pleadingly to his face as she faltered out a similar request. But their entreaties were in vain. Fred declined politely but firmly, and entered the house to announce his determination to Major Percival and his lady. Here, as he expected, he was again overwhelmed with entreaties to remain; but having resisted those of Edith, he found little difficulty in remaining firm in his determination.

"At least, then you will soon visit us again?" urged Mrs. Percival, when she found all her entreaties of no avail.

To rid himself of their importunities, Fred promised, and early the next morning he was off.

The family were all assembled on the front piazza, to say good-by—all but Edith.

"Where's Edith?" inquired the major, as he, too, missed her.

"She had a bad headache this morning, and couldn't leave her room," replied Nell, to whom the question was addressed. "It's strange, too! I never knew her to have the headache before."

She glanced demurely at Fred, who was shaking hands with her father, and there was a world of meaning in her bright eyes.

"Well, good-by, Miss Ellen," he said, approaching her, "until we meet again. Remember me to your sister."

He bowed, sprang in the carriage and drove off, quite unconscious that from her chamber window the eyes of Edith were watching him until he disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHER AND SON.

"Fathers have flinty hearts, no prayers
Can move them."
—Shakespeare.

It was drawing toward the close of a pleasant summer day. The sun was just sinking behind the western hilltops, when a carriage rattled along the dusty streets and stopped before a plain but commodious looking dwelling.

A young man, tall and handsome, sprang out, and, turning to the servant, whom the wheels had brought out, demanded:

"Does Sir William Stanley live here?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Is he at home now?" inquired the young man.

"Yes, sir."

"Alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then show me to his room. I wish to see him immediately."

"But, sir, really," stammered the man, "Sir William dislikes to be intruded upon. If you will give me your name, I will announce you."

"My good fellow, I'll not put you to so much trouble. Just show me to his room and I'll take the consequences."

Hurried away by the impatient and commanding manner of the young man, the domestic, sorely against his will, was forced to obey. Preceding the impudent stranger (as he considered him), to the library, he opened the door and ushered him into the "presence," and immediately beat a precipitate retreat.

A tall, stately man, of middle age and military bearing, sat writing at a desk. There was a striking resemblance between the two—the same tall, commanding figure—the same haughty, aristocratic air, the same fiery, dark eye. But the winning smile that sometimes gave such a look of inexpressible sweetness to the face of the younger, never appeared on the thin, firmly compressed lips of the other.

The noise made by the opening of the door aroused him. He looked up quickly with an air of anger at the interruption, but as his eye fell on the young man's face, he sprang from his seat and caught him impetuously by the hand.

"Fred! by all that's lucky!" he exclaimed, in a tone of delight, "when did you arrive? I was just wishing this moment that you were here."

"I only reached here a day or two ago," replied Fred, returning his cordial grasp.

"And how are our friends in Paris?" inquired Sir William.

"They are well, sir. I had several letters for you from them, but it was my fate to be shipwrecked, and they were, unfortunately, lost."

"Shipwrecked?" said the father, inquiringly.

"Yes, sir," replied Fred, as he related their adventures on sea, omitting, however, that part concerning Edith.

"So, Gus Elliott accompanied you, did he?" inquired Sir William, when he had concluded. "Where is he now?"

"At his uncle's, Major Percival's," replied Fred, beginning to trace the pattern of the carpet with the end of his riding whip.

"Ah! indeed? I know his son, young Percival. Fine fellow, too—fine fellow! And there's a friend of his, too—De Lisle, I think they call him," continued

Sir William, without noticing his son's sudden start, "an example for half the young men in this rebellious land. You saw, of course, the appointment I've procured for you in the army."

"I did, sir," said Fred, preparing himself for the storm that was coming.

"Well, I must say," said Sir William, surveying him with a look of calm surprise, not to say displeasure, "that for such good news you seem wonderfully little elated. Why, sir, at your age I would have been wild with delight at such an offer."

Fred still sat silent, and his father, after regarding him for a moment with a look of increasing astonishment, went on:

"There are sundry reports in circulation not at all to your credit, Frederic, and though I have always refused to believe them, yet they have given me a great deal of mortification. It is now in your power to prove these reports false, and enable me to hear my son's name once more without blushing for him. You will go immediately, and report yourself at headquarters."

The last sentence was spoken with an air of stern command terribly galling to Fred, even though coming from the lips of a father. His calm, truth-beaming eye met that of his father unflinchingly, as he rose to his feet and stood confronting him.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, repectfully, but firmly; "I cannot go."

"Cannot?" repeated Sir William, starting back in mingled anger and amazement. "Good heaven! is it possible these reports were really true—can it be that my son is a coward?"

"I am no coward, sir!" replied Fred, proudly, an indignant flush passing over his face.

"Then, sir, you are a traitor—a rebel!" exclaimed Sir William, fiercely, as he involuntarily half drew his sword.

"Neither, sir!" replied Fred, with perfect calmness.

"Then, in the name of heaven, what are you?" cried his father, passionately, goaded beyond all bounds by the young man's cool, though respectful demeanor.

Fred stood erect, while his eye lit up and encountered, fearlessly, the angry orbs glaring upon him.

"Sir!" he said, proudly, "I am an American by birth and by feeling. I cannot take up arms, even at the command of a father, against my countrymen!"

Sir William grew absolutely livid with passion.

"Ungrateful, undutiful wretch!" he exclaimed, in a voice that sounded hoarse and unnatural with rage; "do you dare to reply to your father thus? I command you, sir, on your peril, never to speak such words again. I tell you, mad-headed, disobedient youth, that you will—you shall—you must obey me!"

Fred stood silent, with his arms folded and a look of unmistakable determination in his eye.

"Have you heard me?" exclaimed his father, striding toward and glaring upon him with fiery eyes. "I say you shall obey me!"

"I hear you, sir," replied Fred, calmly, meeting his gaze with an unflinching eye.

"And you shall heed me, too. Go immediately, instantly, and report yourself, and by your bravery strive to atone for your hot-headed presumption. D'ye hear me, sir?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you will obey?"

"Most decidedly no, sir!"

"You will not?" exclaimed Sir William, with a glance that might have annihilated him, it was so intensely, scorchingly angry.

"No, sir!"

"Base, degenerate scoundrel! Do you not dread a father's curse?"

"Not when my conscience tells me I have done no wrong, to deserve it."

"Conscience!" repeated his father with a bitter sneer; "methinks that is an article you are but little acquainted with. Pray, Sir Parson, have you ever heard the command, 'Honor thy father?'"

"Yes, and I have heard another, 'Husbands, love and cherish your wives!' Which in your estimation, sir, has the greater force?"

He spoke, almost without knowing it, in a tone of such concentrated bitterness that his father quailed before him.

"I am not in the humor for fooling," he said, angrily. "Will you or will you not obey me?"

"You have my answer already."

"And you still persist in disobeying me?"

"I must, sir, in this matter."

"And may I ask, most patriotic young man, what you intend doing?" inquired Sir William, with a sneer of withering sarcasm.

"I intend joining the American army," said Fred, calmly.

"You do!" exclaimed his father, with flashing eyes. "Do you really mean to say you are going to take sides against me—your father, sir?"

Sir William bit his lip and began to pace rapidly up and down. He saw he had injured his own interest by getting into a passion; his son was not one to be intimidated. Gentle language, he felt, would have produced a much greater impression, and all unused as his lips were to it, he determined to try its efficacy. It was not that he really loved his son so much, although he did feel more affection for him than for any one else; but it was not in his selfish nature to

love any one much. The opinion of the world was what he feared; he felt it would be a terrible humiliation to be pointed at hereafter as a man whose son was a rebel!"

Full of this idea, he advanced toward Fred, who stood watching his varying countenance, and reading, with his searching eyes, his very inmost thoughts.

"Frederic," he said, in a subdued tone, "I feel I have been wrong in speaking as I have done, but consider the provocation. You are my only child—the last descendant of an ancient house; without you to perpetuate it our family will become extinct. You are my only hope, Frederic; you will not desert me in my old age?"

What was begun in policy ended in real pathos. His anger and reproaches had fallen unheeded, but his last words went to the heart of Fred.

"Father," he said, "I cannot alter my determination. Therefore, cease to urge me to do what duty forbids."

"Duty, Frederic! Do not pervert the word. Your duty is by the side of your father. Where else should a son be? This cant about 'freeing your country' is all very well for those hare-brained ragamuffins who follow the rebel Washington, but does not become you. Remain with me, and you will be heir to one of the noblest estates in old England. Persist in this mad scheme, and I shall be compelled to disinherit you."

He commenced to speak calmly, but as he proceeded, his anger overmastered every other feeling, and he assumed his former threatening tone of command toward the close.

"That last argument, father, was the most ineffectual one you could have used," said his son, quietly. "Wealth I have never coveted."

"Don't dare to call me father!" said the now thoroughly incensed parent. "You are henceforth no son of mine. I cast you off; I disown you, and if you are caught fighting for the rebels, I will have you hung as a traitor. Mark my words—it is no idle threat. And now, sir, begone instantly! Never darken these doors again! Away, thou ingrate!"

He paused, choked with rage. Fred's face was deadly pale; the words sounded terribly unnatural and fearful, coming from a parent's lips.

"Father! you do not—you cannot mean"—

"Away, sir!" repeated Sir William, waving his hand. "I have spoken no hasty words, to be repented of afterward! I never threaten what I do not intend to perform, and if ever you are taken prisoner, I repeat it, you shall hang as high as Haman! Yes, sir, I will keep my word, though King George himself pleaded for you, and if none other could be found, I would be your executioner myself! You have heard me! Begone!"

Little did either dream how soon that threat was to be fulfilled.

He held the door open, and signed for him to go. Without a word, Fred took his hat and quitted the house.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HERMIT OF THE CLIFFS.

"It was a lonely spot in which he dwelt;
Man shunned his roof, few cared to ask its shelter.
Not that the old man bore an evil name,
But that his house was lonely."

—Old Play.

THREE days later Fred sat in the parlor of an unpretending looking hotel, carelessly glancing over a newspaper, when a waiter entered and announced that "a gemman was 'quirin' for him downstairs."

"For me?" repeated Fred. "Who can it be?"

"Dunno, sah," replied the darky, fancying the question was addressed to himself; "I 'spect"—

"Show him up," said Fred, cutting short the darky's exclamation.

In a few moments a tall, handsome fellow, with a good-humored look and a frank, off-hand air, entered. Advancing to Fred, he held out his hand, with a smile:

"Mr. Stanley, I believe," he said, courteously.

"Yes, sir," replied Fred, bowing; "but I regret to say I am quite ignorant of the name of"—

"Ah! beg pardon!" interrupted the newcomer. "My name is Nugent Percival. I wish I could thank you sufficiently for the inestimable service you have rendered us all in saving my sister's life."

Fred strove to affect a genteel indifference, though he felt the blood rushing to his face.

"Pray do not mention it," he replied. "I am only too happy to have had the opportunity of saving her. I trust she is well?"

"Yes, Edith is quite well, and joins most urgently with the rest of the family in inviting you to return with me home. Do not refuse, Mr. Stanley," he continued, seeing the almost haughty expression of Fred's face; "you have no idea how disappointed they will all be. Gus would have accompanied me here, but my sister Nell positively refused to let him go—for fear, as she expressed it, he might get shipwrecked again."

Fred smiled and walked irresolutely to the window. Edith urged him to return; his heart leaped at the words, but a moment's thought convinced him that Percival had merely used the words as

a matter of form. Still, he felt an inward wish to go. Something made him fancy Edith was not wholly indifferent to him, and he longed to hear her say so with her own lips. But, then, her affianced De Lisle? What if he were there? Well, even so it would be a comfort to see what manner of man his rival was. Still, then there was an undefined hope that he was not at Percival Hall.

"I hardly know," he said, hesitating, "whether to intrude a second time or not. There may be strangers"— He paused.

"Only the family," said Percival, in his frank way. "So if meeting strangers is your only objection, you see you can no longer refuse. Come, Stanley (excuse my familiarity), you must come back with me. I have been threatened with all manner of calamities by Nell (who, by the way, pronounces you 'a love of a man') if I did not bring you."

There was something Fred could not resist in the courteous, winning manner of young Percival. He resembled Edith, too, far more than did her sister, and this, perhaps, was the secret cause that drew Fred toward him.

"Well, since a lady commands it, I must obey," he said, gayly, as he ran his fingers through his dark elf-locks. "When do you start?"

"My orders are to wait for you, sir," replied Percival, and I shall most assuredly do so, not having courage to brave the storm I should meet with did I venture to return without you. Therefore, until you are ready, I remain your very humble servant."

"Then you are not likely to be detained," said Fred, "as I am like the soldier's wife—ready to march on a moment's warning."

"Very good!" said Percival; "what say you to starting to-morrow?"

"I have no objection," replied Fred. "I am only spending a day or two here, to kill time."

The matter being thus arranged, Percival, after conversing for a short time on ordinary topics, took his leave. The next morning found them en route.

There was, we must confess it, an unusual throbbing at Fred's heart when he again encountered Edith. She was looking better—more cheerful than he had ever seen her, he fancied—and the cold reserve with which she had formerly treated him, seemed entirely forgotten in the unfeigned pleasure with which she welcomed him back. Fred fancied, or, rather, hoped, this might be caused by the prolonged absence of De Lisle (who had not yet made his appearance), and noticing the eager, happy look with which she met him, his heart leaped with the wild hope that perhaps she loved him, after all.

The greeting of the rest of the family was most cordial, especially that of Nell. That young lady declared "she hadn't had a bit of fun since he left; she never was at a loss for something to laugh at when he was present; it was so funny to see him sitting so stiff and dignified, looking more like a banished prince than an every-day Christian."

A week passed rapidly away at Percival Hall. Rides, drives and walks followed each other, in all of which Fred unaccountably found himself the companion of Edith. Gus, who was generally at his wits' end by the caprices of Nell, found enough to do in taking care of that eccentric young damsel. And Percival usually started off by himself, leaving the well-satisfied couples behind him to their own devices. There was a dangerous fascination for Fred in these interviews. Sometimes, feeling half ashamed of loitering here in idleness, when duty called elsewhere, he would resolve to depart immediately; but days passed on, and he found it impossible to tear himself away. He strove to stifle the twinges of conscience by specious arguments; but reflection would not be stifled, do as he would.

"Well, Stanley, have my sisters introduced you to all the celebrities of the place?" asked Percival, one warm, sunny afternoon, as the whole party, after a longer ramble than usual, strolled toward the house.

"No," said Nell; "we haven't visited the hermit yet!"

"And why have you not brought him there, Puss?" inquired her brother.

"Because the hermit was absent, off on one of his crazy rambles," replied Nell. "He only returned this morning. Old Mat, the gardener, told me."

"Then suppose we go in a party and pay the old gentleman a visit?" said Percival.

"Pray," inquired Fred, "who is the hermit?"

"Oh! a most singular and eccentric old man," replied Percival; "one alike feared and shunned and beloved by the villagers. He resides a few miles from here, near the seashore, and is a lunatic, but perfectly harmless. There is a range of rocks in that direction, which has been known from time immemorial by the name of 'The Cliffs,' and from his fondness for strolling about there he has received the singular and somewhat romantic name of the Hermit of the Cliffs. He first made his appearance here a few years ago, and from his skill in herbs and medicine, became a favorite. He has built a sort of cabin up among the cliffs, and here he has since resided, spending his time in cultivating a little garden or wandering among the rocks. His name is unknown, but he is, no doubt, some unfortunate whom the cares of the world have made an idiot."

"I feel rather curious to see this sin-

gular personage," said Fred. "Let us visit him by all means."

"Is it not too far, brother?" said Edith, anxiously. "The sun will have set before we return."

"What odds?" interrupted the impetuous Nell. "We can return by moonlight, which will be twice as pleasant." And Nell hummed:

"Moonlight hours were made for love."

"Let us start, then," said Gus, "if we are to visit the wizard. There is no time to lose."

For a while the party walked on together, chatting gayly; but the usual phenomenon took place before they had proceeded far. Gus and Nell saw something very interesting on ahead that caused them to quicken their steps, while Fred and Edith found it quite convenient to walk slowly. There was a scarcely repressed smile hovering about young Percival's lips, as, under the plea of acting as guide, he walked on by himself in advance of the rest.

Two hours' slow walking brought them to the cliffs, a high, steep, craggy range of rocks. As a matter of course, each party sought the cottage of the hermit by a different path. Fred and his fair companion, absorbed in conversation, had nearly forgotten the object of their visit, when, turning an abrupt angle in the path, he raised his head, shook back his dark locks, and his eye fell on the most singular looking personage he had ever beheld.

It was an old man of grave and majestic aspect, who stood leaning on a staff. His long, white hair and beard flowed over his robes and gave to his pale but benign countenance a venerable look that immediately commanded respect. A small skull-cap of black velvet was on his head, forming a strong contrast to the hoary whiteness of his aged locks. His dress was most singular, consisting of a long, flowing robe of some dark stuff, that swept the ground as he walked, and was confined at the waist by a girdle of black velvet. Altogether, his appearance was so odd, so singular, that Fred stood staring at him, transfixed with astonishment. The hermit himself stood gazing upon them for a moment; then, raising his cap, he said, in a grave, impressive voice, laying his hand on his heart:

"Peace be between us, my children."

"Amen, father!" responded Edith, who was familiar with the singular appearance and address of the hermit, while Fred still stood lost in wonder.

"Why hast thou visited me this evening, my daughter?" said the old man, turning to Edith.

"My friend"—and she glanced toward Fred—"has heard so much of the Hermit of the Cliffs that he was anxious to visit you. Therefore I took the liberty of bringing him."

The old man turned slowly and fixed his mild, dark eye on the face of the young man.

"What is thy name, my son?" he inquired.

"I am called Frederic Stanley, good father," said Fred, raising his hat and bowing with deep reverence.

The eyes of the hermit were fixed on him long and steadily, as if striving to read his inmost thoughts. As if still uncertain, he approached, and, pushing back the thick curls that fell darkly over the young man's brow, gazed earnestly into the calm, dark eyes that fearlessly met his own. Edith looked up in Fred's face with a smile.

"Yes," said the hermit at last, speaking more to himself than to the listeners, "he has his father's proud bearing and haughty eyes. The same impetuous bravery, but a nobler and more generous heart."

"Do you know my father?" inquired the young man, in surprise.

"Yes, better, perhaps, than he does himself. I know him for a rash, self-willed, obstinate, hard-hearted man."

"Sir, he is my father!" said Fred, flushing angrily.

The penetrating eye of the hermit was fixed steadily on his face.

"And can you defend him, he said, "after parting from him as you did last?"

Fred stood aghast. The meeting between the father and son had been strictly private, and yet this mysterious being seemed to know all that had occurred.

"How came you to know of our last meeting?" he demanded, imperiously.

"Perhaps I know more than you are aware of, my son," said the hermit, while something like a faint smile passed over his face.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Fred, impetuously, "you have merely made a clever guess. Since you know we are both fiery-tempered, it required no great skill to predict that we might differ."

"Shall I convince you, most noble doubter, that I know of what I speak?" said the hermit, quietly.

"If you can," replied Fred, with an incredulous smile.

"Then name the way."

"Tell me of the past," said Fred, glancing meaningly at Edith.

"Be it so. We will begin with your age. You will be twenty-five years old the third of next November."

Fred bowed, with a look of surprise.

"Your mother died alone and in sorrow; the hands of strangers placed her in the grave."

Fred grew deadly pale and drew back.

"You have performed some great service for the lady by your side," continued the hermit, quietly. "And at present linger with her here, neglecting the duty for which your father has disowned you."

"Enough, sir," interrupted Fred, haughtily. "Be you man or demon, I will listen to no imputations on my conduct. How you have obtained this information concerning me I know not; neither do I care. Come, Miss Percival, let us go; the evening air is too damp for you, and I see our friends are on their way home. I wish you good evening, Sir Sage." And, raising his hat, Fred turned coldly away.

"Stay one moment," said the hermit, laying his hand on the young man's arm and speaking with such deep solemnity that it awed him in spite of himself. "Stay, rash youth, and be warned. Beware of false friends. There is danger at hand; you will soon meet one who can work you much evil. I am your friend, though you may not believe it. Go, and be warned! Despise not the words of one to whom age has brought wisdom. Farewell, my children, and Heaven bless you!"

He bowed, and, turning slowly round, disappeared among the rocks.

"Let us go," said Edith, who clung, pale and trembling, to Fred's arm; "his words frighten me."

"Fear not, fairest Edith; those ominous words were not meant for you," said Fred, gently, as he wrapped her shawl close around her and hurried down the rocks.

"It may be wrong—it may be superstitious," said Edith, "but I feel the strangest presentiment of coming danger stealing over me. Something terrible and undefined, from which I shrink in fear and horror."

"I thought your nerves were too strong to be thus shaken by the idle raving of a moonstruck man," said Fred, gravely.

"I am not nervous," said Edith, earnestly. "It is a feeling for which I cannot account. Strange, is it not, that the old man could tell you of the past so truly?"

"It is, indeed!" said Fred, thoughtfully. "I cannot account for it."

During the remainder of the journey home both were silent and thoughtful. It might be fancy, but Fred thought there was something more confiding than usual in the way Edith clung to his arm. The moonlight fell softly around ere they reached Percival Hall, subduing with its lights and shadows the irregular outline of the building. As they walked slowly up the avenue in front, Nell came flying down the steps all in a flutter of surprise.

"Edith! Edith!" she cried, as she caught sight of her sister, "guess who's come?"

"Who?" said Edith.

"Why, nobody less than Ralph De Lisle!"

What meant Edith's convulsive start? She lifted her eyes to the dark, handsome face above her, and Fred was struck by her deadly paleness. Their eyes met, and that one glance told what their lips had never spoken.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RIVALS.

"It is a dreadful question, when we love,
To ask is love returned."
—The Hunchback.

"Come along, Edith; here is a friend of yours!" called the cheerful voice of young Percival, as they entered the hall.

Still leaning on the arm of Fred—for she trembled with inward emotion—Edith entered the parlor. A gentleman arose, and advanced toward her with extended hand.

Fred ran his eye over his rival from head to foot. He was tall, considerably above middle height, elegant in person and easy in address. His features, taken separately, were decidedly handsome; but there was a sinister look in the ever-restless glances of his keen, black eyes. His complexion was dark—almost swarthy—with hair, mustache and whiskers of shining, jetty blackness. There was an expression about the well-cut mouth Fred could not tolerate, and the forehead, though high, was narrow and retreating. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and everything about him, even to the carefully modulated tones of his voice, bespoke the perfect gentleman.

"Mr. Stanley—Mr. De Lisle," said Edith, making a faint attempt at an introduction.

Fred bowed coldly and haughtily, and his salute was with equal haughtiness acknowledged. There was something so contemptuous in the supercilious air with which De Lisle regarded him, that Fred's eyes flashed and his cheek crimsoned with anger.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, eh, Edith?" said her father. "You did not expect to see your intended so soon, did you?"

Edith suddenly discovered there was an interesting view from the window, and couldn't possibly hear her father's words.

"I say, Ralph," said Nell, leaning over his chair with a short laugh, "you had better look out for Edith! Mr. Stanley's better looking than you are, and"—

The rest of the sentence was lost in a whisper.

An angry flush passed over De Lisle's face, as he bit his lip till it grew bloodless. Fred sat talking to Mrs. Percival with great empressement, though he

heard every word of Nellie's remark, and he awaited the response with deep interest.

"Oh, there is no danger! I am not afraid of him," replied De Lisle, with a sneer of intense contempt.

"Don't be too certain," said Nell. "Don't you remember the proverb, 'Nothing is certain in this uncertain world?' Well, it's as true as preaching; so you had better look out. If 'Dith gives you the sack some fine morning, don't say I didn't give you fair warning."

"I have a better opinion of your sister's taste, my pretty Black Eyes. If I am to be a discarded lover, I trust it will not be for an unknown adventurer and rebel," said De Lisle, in the same sneering tone.

It may be imagined with what feelings Fred listened to this dialogue. His fiery spirit was roused beyond endurance by the last insult, and, forgetting his position as guest, he was about to make some fierce retort, when Gus strolled leisurely in and asked Nell what she was talking about.

"Repeating poetry, ain't we, Ralph?" said Nell, with an arch glance.

"That's a good child. Say some more," said Gus, lounging on a couch.

Nell, always prepared for an emergency, stood with clasped hands in the middle of the floor and repeated solemnly:

"My mother she tells me
Nature has given the lips—
Lips to speak with, my daughter, my own,
And so thou must use them for speaking alone.
But why are they red, then?
White lips would answer for speaking as well;
And why has she said, then—
Only for speaking? Oh! who can tell
A poor little innocent girl like me,
For what but to speak with can my mouth be?"

"Shall I tell you?" said Gus, taking a step toward her; but, gliding through his hands as if she had been a sunbeam, she vanished through the open doors.

"Shall we take a stroll in the garden?" said Percival, advancing toward him. "The night is too fine to be spent within doors."

Fred, glad to escape from the stream of small talk with which Mrs. Percival was overwhelming him, arose, and, passing his arm through that of his friend, quitted the house.

"I heard the remarks of that thoughtless sister of mine," remarked Percival, in a tone of slight embarrassment, "and, feeling you must be annoyed, took the liberty of inviting you out. I trust you have too much good sense to feel hurt at anything Nell may say."

"Did you hear what he said?" demanded Fred, almost fiercely.

"I did, and I felt as much annoyed by it myself as you could possibly be. It was too bad of De Lisle—too bad, positively. But we must make allowances for these lovers, Mr. Stanley," he said, smiling. "Jealousy will make the best of them slightly impertinent. He was vexed with Edith, too. Her welcome, as you doubtless perceived, was a cold one."

"That he should dare to call me an adventurer!" exclaimed Fred, with flashing eyes. "I, who have descended from one of the proudest families in England! And that I should be obliged to sit tamely down and bear with the insult!"

He ground his teeth and clenched his hands with suppressed passion.

"Oh, never mind, my dear fellow!" said Percival, soothingly. "Ralph is a hot-headed youth, and when angry is not very choice in the words he uses. I beg you'll think no more about it. Nell's remarks were very tantalizing to a lover, you must allow. I shall caution her against speaking so again."

"I tell you, Percival!" exclaimed Fred, vehemently. "Were he not your father's guest, as I am, I would call him out and make him retract his words or shoot him like a dog. 'Rebel and adventurer!' " he repeated, still more fiercely. "Is it from a hound like that mustached puppy I must bear such an insult?"

"My dear Stanley," said Percival, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "I beg there may be no quarreling on this subject. Consider my sister's name will be involved, and as you are a man of honor, you will submit to this taunt rather than that the breath of slander should be affixed to her."

"For your sister's sake I would do anything—submit to anything!" exclaimed Fred, impetuously. Then, seeing the other's look of surprise, he added, almost fiercely: "Do you think I am blind—do you think I have the heart of a stone? do you think it possible that I could be continually in your sister's society and not become interested in her? I tell you, Nugent Percival, I love your sister, though she be betrothed to the man I hate, Ralph De Lisle."

There was something appalling in the unsubdued fierceness with which he spoke. His eyes seemed actually to emit flashes of fire, and his steps resounded, as he paced up and down, as though he was shod with iron. There was a cloud on the handsome features of Nugent Percival, as he again placed his hand on his shoulder and said:

"My dear Stanley, my dear fellow, I am sorry for you. I never dreamed that this was the case. I would to Heaven Edith's choice had fallen upon you first, instead of De Lisle. But it is too late now. And for the sake of peace—for the happiness of all—I beg you will endeavor to avoid a quarrel with him while he remains here. He is a perfect fiend when

roused, and I greatly fear the happiness of our whole household will be destroyed should anything occur."

"Forgive me, my dear Percival; I have been mad. To-morrow I will depart. I have loitered here too long, negiecting the duty which calls me away. De Lisle's taunt shall be borne this time, but should we meet again,"—he paused, but his eyes finished the sentence.

"Oh, come, Stanley; you mustn't think of going to-morrow," interposed Percival. "Do you not know to-morrow is Nellie's seventeenth birthday, and she is to celebrate it by a party in the evening? Come, my good friend, be reasonable! You cannot depart to-morrow. The thing is impossible!" Fred knit his brow and paced moodily up and down. "Beside, if you leave us so suddenly," continued Percival, in his frank, cheerful way, "I will think that my words have driven you off. That would be a poor requital for saving my sister's life."

"For that I need no thanks," said Fred, huskily. Then, seeing the anxious expression on Percival's face, he said, more composedly: "My dear friend, I will remain, as you request, but I certainly must depart on the day following. Duty to my country imperatively calls me away."

"Ah! Edith told me something of this!" said Percival, while a flush tinged his cheek. "Stanley, I envy you."

"Envy me!" exclaimed Fred, bitterly.

"Yes, for I have no doubt a brilliant career is in store for you. For me, it is out of the question."

"And why, may I ask?"

"Oh! the reason is simple enough. I will not accept a commission in the English army, and there would be the deuce to pay did I enlist in any other. I have not courage to face my father's anger, so I choose to remain neutral. Rather cowardly, is it not?"

He laughed carelessly as he spoke, but there was a bitterness in his tone that did not escape Fred.

"There's De Lisle now," he continued. "He's a red-hot Tory, and is considered both by my father and yours as the beau ideal of what a young man in these troublous times should be. There's something almost fiendish in the hate with which he pursues the 'rebel Yankees.' I always considered mercy a necessary virtue in a soldier, but he looks upon it as quite superfluous, not to say childish. He is the leader of a gang of savage-looking cutthroats, more like Spanish bandits, to my mind, than Christian soldiers. With these he goes hovering about, never bringing about any particular result, but harassing the enemy and cutting off straggling parties. Heigho!" he added, suddenly changing his tone, "he does something after all, and that is more than I can say."

"But why," demanded Fred, "do you not declare your real sentiments to your father, and follow the dictates of your own conscience? It seems to me (pardon my plain speaking) that there is something unmanly in acting this way."

Percival turned away his head for a moment, and when he again spoke his voice was low and husky.

"I would do so, Stanley; Heaven knows it is from no unworthy motive that I shrink from it, but my mother, it would kill her."

"My dear Percival," said Fred, grasping his hand, "say no more; I honor you for your sentiments. You will pardon my words, I feel assured."

"That is already done," replied Percival, smiling, "and now, since we have both talked ourselves into a proper degree of coolness, suppose we return to the house."

Edith was seated at the piano, singing, when they entered, with De Lisle standing by her side to turn over the leaves. As may be supposed, this sight did not tend to add to Fred's composure; but with the determination of avoiding all outward sign of annoyance, he seated himself by the window, and listened quietly to the sweet voice of the singer, as she warbled the words of an old Scotch ballad.

Later in the evening, when Edith bowed her good night to him, he encountered the eyes of De Lisle fixed upon him, with a look of such undying hate, that he absolutely started. The next moment he recovered his presence of mind, and regarding him for a moment with a contemptuous smile, far more stinging than any words could have been, he passed from the room.

Alone in the solitude of his own chamber he strove to think calmly over the events of the day. Calmly! It was hard indeed to do so with such a fire burning in his heart and brain. The memory of the hermit's strange prediction kept constantly recurring to his mind, but though he thought until his head grew giddy, he could not imagine who that strange being was. Then as the other events of the evening passed one by one before him, he came in due course of time to the insulting words of De Lisle, and once again his eye flashed, and his cheek burned, as he trod fiercely up and down the room.

And Edith! Did she love him? That expressive glance, as they entered the house, had seemed to say so! If so, would she still fulfil her engagement with De Lisle? He dweit upon this problem until his brain was in a whirl, and when he at last threw himself on the bed, it was with the intention of seeking a solution from herself the following day.

As every member of the family, how-

ever, was busy all day in preparing for the festivities of the evening, no opportunities occurred for him to see Edith alone. Accordingly, accepting Percival's invitation, he went out with him to take a stroll, only returning in time to dress for the evening.

When Fred entered the drawing-room, he found it crowded to excess. Owing to the warmth of the weather, the doors and windows were all left open, and the cool night-breeze came drifting in, laden with the perfume of flowers, the glare of the lighted rooms contrasting pleasantly with the calm, full moonlight. Edith, robed in snowy white, was there, looking lovelier than ever. She stood by the open window, partly in the shadow, her head leaning on her hand, a sad, dreamy look on her fair face. As Fred approached, she raised her cloudless blue eyes to his face, and he started to see her look exactly as she did the day he rescued her from the burning ship. The rose-tint on her cheek deepened to crimson beneath his gaze, and with an inclination of her head, she glided away, and disappeared amid the crowd.

While he stood looking after her, Nell approached, leaning on the arm of De Lisle. Nell looked absolutely beautiful, there was such a deep, living glow on her cheeks, and such a bright, streaming light in her eyes. De Lisle, most elegantly dressed, was also looking killingly handsome, and had evidently prepared himself to make a deeper impression than ever upon Edith.

"O Mr. Stanley!" exclaimed Nell, "what have you done with Edith? She was here a moment ago, with you." There was a wicked emphasis on the pronoun. "Where is she now? I want her dreadfully."

At sight of De Lisle, Fred's face grew cold, almost haughty.

"I am sorry I cannot inform you," he answered stiffly, "Miss Percival did not remain here a moment."

"Dear me! I hope she did not leave you on our account," said the wicked Nell, noticing with delight that De Lisle was pale with anger and jealousy. "Come, Ralph, we must look for her. Perhaps you'll join us, Mr. Stanley."

"Excuse me!" said Fred, bowing coldly, as he turned on his heel and left them.

Nell clapped her hands with delight.

"What a creature!" she exclaimed, "as stiff and haughty as papa himself. Did you ever see such an iron face as he puts on when angry, and the freezing tone in which that 'excuse me' was said."

And Nell imitated his tone so exactly, that anybody but De Lisle would have laughed.

"Conceited, insufferable puppy!" muttered the young man between his clenched teeth.

As Fred strolled into the dancing-room, he saw Edith and Gus standing at the head of one of the quadrilles, and laughing and chatting gayly during the rests. Feeling in no humor for dancing himself, he wandered into the music-room, where he could catch glimpses of the gay dancers, and listen to the merry strains of the music.

There was a deep bay window in the music-room, screened by heavy curtains. In this recess there was a lounge. Fred threw himself on it, and drew the curtains to screen himself from the observation of any stragglers who might enter.

Suddenly the sound of a familiar voice met his ear. Raising himself on his elbow, he glanced from his hiding-place, and beheld the well-known features of De Lisle apparently absorbed in earnest conversation with another man.

His companion, from some strange, unaccountable cause, immediately riveted the attention of Fred, as no other stranger had ever done before. Not that there was anything remarkable about him. He was a man of middle age, robust and sinewy, but not stout, and dressed in the plain garb of a civilian of the day. His features were bronzed by the sun, and seamed with more wrinkles than his age might seem to warrant. His hair was grizzled, and streaked alternately with black and gray. His eyes, small, sharp, bright and piercing, were set in two deep caverns, overhung by thick, busy eyebrows, and were ever wandering around, with a quick, restless look that seemed to take everything in at once.

It was impossible for Fred to leave the room without being observed, consequently he was forced to remain.

"I tell you!" exclaimed De Lisle, "he has supplanted me, any fool can see that the girl is in love with him. Even that confounded little will-o'-the-wisp, her sister, can jibe and mock me about it. I tell you, Paul, the infernal upstart shall repent it in dust and ashes. No man can cross my path and live."

"Why do you not tell Major Percival he is a rebel?" said his companion, "such a stanch royalist would not harbor rebels, surely."

"Yes, he would," said De Lisle, vehemently, "the very demons themselves seem to conspire against me."

"Oh, well! you cannot always expect them to stand your friends," said the man Paul, with something like a sneer; "they have been true to you a good long while. But were I you, I would tell the major, anyway."

"Tell the major! have I not done so? and what was his answer? 'Mr. Stanley has saved my daughter's life and is now

my guest; and, therefore, no one shall presume to insult him while he is in this house.' I mentioned his growing intimacy with Edith, and giving me one of his stern looks, he replied, 'Mr. Stanley is a gentleman, and as such, it will be enough for him to know her hand is already engaged.' So that was all the satisfaction I got from him. Perdition seize them all!" And he gnashed his teeth with impotent rage.

"Take it coolly, my dear captain," said his companion, quietly; "no one ever does business by getting into a passion. You hate this fellow, that's plain enough; and now, what do you propose to do?"

"Listen!" said De Lisle, in a tone of concentrated hatred, "and tell me if it is not a glorious plan. Ha! here comes a crowd of fools from the drawing-room. Come elsewhere and I will tell you." And passing his arm through that of his companion, the twain quitted the music-room.

When they were gone, Fred arose on his feet. What his feelings were while listening to the above dialogue may be imagined. A profound contempt for De Lisle mastered every other feeling. He had seen intuitively from the first that he was not a man to be trusted, but he had never believed him capable of such villainy. And this was the man Edith Percival was to marry. The thought was maddening! Fred trod up and down like a caged tiger, unconscious that the eyes of many were regarding him with wonder. Becoming aware at last of this, he seized his hat, and wandered out to the garden. The calm, holy stillness of the night soothed his excited feelings. The cool, pitying breeze fanned his feverish brow as he shook back the dark locks that fell heavily over his temples. The moonlight lay sleeping on the earth, the trees waved and mourned softly together; and, at times, the shrill cry of the whip-poor-will and katydid would come floating to his ear, mingling with the gay strains of music that reached him, softened and subdued by the distance. All breathed of peace and repose, and unconsciously the calm of the scene stole into his heart, subduing its tumultuous throbbings.

Scarcely knowing whither he went, he strolled toward a little arbor at the foot of the garden, a favorite retreat of Edith. He expected to find it untenanted, but to his surprise he beheld the slight figure of a young girl, robed in white, kneeling on the ground, her face hidden in her hands, her long, golden hair falling in a bright shower over her shoulders. One might almost fancy her some pitying angel weeping over a fallen soul as she knelt there in the clear moonlight, in her snowy dress, as still and motionless as though turned to marble.

"Edith!" said the voice of him she was then thinking of, whose very tone seemed able to recall her from death to life.

With a suppressed cry she started to her feet, and seemed, for a moment, about to fly; but something in the eye of Fred restrained her, and she stood silent, her bosom rising and falling with powerful emotion.

"Edith," he said, taking her hand, which she did not attempt to withdraw, "why are you here alone, exposed to the damp night air?"

"Because I would be alone: because I am weary of all this empty gayety; because I am wretched. That is," she added, coloring painfully, and checking herself, "I—I am"— She paused, abruptly.

"Edith," he began, hurriedly, "I have something to say to you—something you must hear."

The words were intended to be spoken in a tone of entreaty, but it partook largely of command.

"Oh! let me return, Mr. Stanley," said Edith, evidently much agitated; "we will be missed."

"Edith, you must hear me now!" he exclaimed, vehemently, as she attempted to withdraw her hand. "I cannot suffer this opportunity to pass unimproved, and you must listen to me. Edith, I love you—since the first moment I saw you I have loved you, and even though you be the betrothed of another, I cannot but love you still. You are the first to whom these lips ever made such an avowal, and though you may think me bold and presumptuous, I can no longer remain silent. Tell me, dearest, have I loved in vain? If so, we will never meet more. Edith! Edith! dearer than life, answer me!"

There was no reply. With her face hidden in her hands, she was sobbing convulsively.

"I am answered," said Fred, huskily. "Edith, farewell! May you be as happy with the husband of your choice as I would have striven to render you."

He turned to go. Edith raised her head, and saw in the wan moonlight the deadly paleness of his face.

"Mr. Stanley—Frederic!" she said, faintly.

In a moment he was again by her side, looking down into the fair face, veiled by the long, golden hair."

"Dearest Edith," he said, eagerly, "may I hope"—

"No! no! hope for nothing!" she interrupted, "but I feared you were offended. O, Mr. Stanley, you do not know how utterly miserable I am!"

"And why, fairest lady?" he said, almost coldly; "since you love Mr. De Lisle, methinks you should be happy."

"I do not love him—I do not care for

him!" she said, earnestly; "it is not that."

"And what, then, is it?" Confide in me, dearest. Is it even as I have been rash enough to hope? Dearest Edith, do you indeed love me?"

"I do!" she said, faintly, as her head dropped on his shoulder. "But why do I say so?" she exclaimed, starting up—"I, who am to be the wife of another!"

"Edith! Edith! will you marry a man you do not love?"

"I must!" she replied, dejectedly; "I dare not refuse—my father has set his heart on this union. O Frederic! would we had never met!"

"It would, indeed, have been better, Edith. But would it not be wiser to brave the anger of a parent than to be made miserable for life by marrying one you dislike?"

"Oh! I know not what to do!" said Edith, wringing her hands.

"Let me advise you, dearest Edith," said Fred, earnestly. "Refuse, firmly, to marry De Lisle; your father will not compel you to do so. Believe me, it is from no selfish motive I urge you to do this. You and I, dear Edith, are doomed to part. But it would be a crime—a perjury, to go before God's holy altar and vow to love, honor, and obey a man you detest."

"But my father? O, Mr. Stanley, you do not know how terrible his wrath is!" said Edith, wildly.

"Better to brave his wrath, Edith, than render yourself forever wretched. De Lisle is not worthy of you; let me advise you as a brother, to reject him!"

Edith dropped her head, and for a moment seemed lost in thought. Then raising it, she said, firmly:

"With heaven's blessing, Frederic, I will do so. I feel it would be wrong to marry him; but his anger and my father's will be fearful. And you"— she added, looking anxiously up into the face bending over her.

"I shall leave to-morrow," he replied, speaking calmly, by an effort, "happy in knowing I am beloved, though we may never meet again."

She looked down with a shudder.

"It is so cold," she said, absently, "let us return.

He drew her arm within his, and turned slowly toward the house. When they disappeared the figure of a man arose from where it had been crouching behind some low bushes, hearing every word.

It was De Lisle! and as the moonlight fell upon it, his face wore the look of a demon.

CHAPTER IX.

DOOMED.

"Go, some of you, cry a reprieve."
—Beggar's Opera.

NIGHT had settled over the earth, dark, chilly and starless. A thick, drizzling rain was falling, while the storm-clouds chased one another over the sky.

In a narrow, gloomy cell, cold and fireless, sat Fred Stanley. It was a poor place for such an occupant—unfurnished save by a wooden bench and a rude cot on which lay a mattress, covered by a coarse blanket, so filthy that he shrank from it in disgust.

When Fred quitted the residence of Major Percival he joined the American army, where his bravery soon won for him promotion.

Being caught hovering around the English outposts with a number of his men, he was imprisoned, tried by court martial, and condemned to be shot as a traitor and a spy. It was not death that could subdue the proud spirit of Fred Stanley, but, oh! fearful to think of, his father had been his judge; it was his lips that had pronounced his death-warrant.

He sat on the rude bench, his arms folded across his breast, his lips compressed, his neglected locks fallen darkly over his face. It was his last night on earth. Ere the sun rose again he would be in eternity.

He thought of Edith, and wondered vaguely if she would grieve to learn his fate; then of her stern father, compelling her to be the wife of De Lisle—until, almost maddened, he sprang to his feet, and paced up and down, with clenched hands and flashing eyes.

It was hard to die, too, so young, with such a glorious career opening before him, to leave the beautiful world that had never seemed half so fair to him before. He thought of his father's bitter words at their stormy interview, with a vague feeling of wonder that they had come true so soon. And then followed a feeling of utter desolation—he was deserted by all, without a friend on earth, doomed to die an ignominious death in the flower of his youth. He strove to pray, but his brain was like a seething cauldron, through which maddening thoughts leaped in wild chaos. Even "God have mercy" seemed glued to his lips.

Suddenly the grating noise of the key turning in the rusty lock arrested his attention. The jailer entered, bearing a lantern, followed by a tall figure wrapped in a cloak. Setting down the light the man departed, and Fred was alone with the stranger.

"Stanley, my dear fellow!" he ex-

claimed, in a choking voice, as the cloak fell off, disclosing the pale features of Nugent Percival.

"Percival, is it you? This is indeed kind!" said Fred, grasping his hand.

"I only learned about an hour ago of this," said Percival, "and came here immediately. I had considerable difficulty in persuading them to allow me to see you. They seem particularly afraid lest you should escape."

"Escape?" repeated Fred, bitterly, "they need not alarm themselves. There is nothing further from my thoughts at present."

"Would to Heaven, my dear friend, I could aid you!" exclaimed Percival, in a voice husky from deep emotion. "This affair is terrible, monstrous, unnatural. They tell me Sir William sat as judge?"

"He did," replied Fred, with stern fierceness, "and most coolly and deliberately condemned me to death. He told me before he would do so, but I little dreamed how soon his words were to come true. The only thing he seemed to hesitate in was, whether his rebel son should die by the rope or the musket. Some of my former friends (the words were pronounced with a withering sneer) persuaded him to let me suffer by the latter, as the more honorable. Have I not reason to be grateful for such condescension?"

He laughed mockingly. It sounded so wild, so strange, so unnatural, that Percival shuddered.

"It is terrible!" he said, in a low voice. "Has he the heart of a man, to condemn his own son to death? It cannot be, it must not be. Fred, he will relent—you will be pardoned; you need not fear death."

Fred started, raised his head, and, flinging back his dark hair, exclaimed fiercely:

"Fear, did you say? I do not fear death! I can walk to the muzzles of their muskets without my heart beating one throb faster. Fear!" His lip curled scornfully.

"But you do not wish to die such a disgraceful death. It would be an honor to fall fighting for one's country; but this, the doom of a traitor! Who could think of such a fate calmly? It might well make the bravest heart quail."

"Poor comfort, my dear Percival!" said Fred, one of those rare smiles, that his face seldom wore of late, lighting up his handsome countenance. "Surprising as it may seem, your words do not tend to cheer me in the least."

"Fred, you shall not perish now, if I have to intercede for your pardon on my knees!" exclaimed Percival, hurried away by his impetuous feelings. "I will go to Sir William and plead for your life!"

"Percival, if you wish me to regard you as my friend, never utter such words again!" said Fred, sternly. "Do you think I would accept the poor boon of life on such degrading terms? No, my dear friend. I thank you for your zeal in my behalf; but think no more of pardon for me. My hours are numbered. I shall never live to see the sun rise again."

Percival strove to speak; but a choking sensation rose in his throat, and kept him silent. Fred paced up and down, after his custom when excited. At last, stopping suddenly before Percival, who sat with his face shaded by his hand, he dashed his heavy locks back from his temples, and said, in a voice quick and excited:

"There is one thing you can do for me—it is the last favor I will ask on earth from any one. Tell your sister—tell Edith, I loved her to the last, and ask her to think of me sometimes when I am dead. Tell her to think of what we spoke of last. She will understand what I mean, and will then believe no selfish motive prompted me; for by that time I shall be beyond feeling any earthly pain."

"Time's up, sir," said the jailer, sharply, shoving his head through the half-opened door.

"Good-by, then, my dear Percival," said Fred, grasping his hand—"we part for the last time! God bless you!"

A convulsive pressure of his hand was the only reply, as Percival turned aside his head to hide the emotion he could not suppress. Not trusting his voice to speak, he pulled his hat down over his eyes and quitted the cell, followed by the turnkey.

Striding through the streets as though shod with the famous seven-league boots, Nugent Percival stopped not until he reached the hotel where he and his father resided during their temporary stay from home.

Major Percival was seated in stately dignity, looking over a formidable pile of letters and accounts. He started back in surprise and consternation as his son, pale, wild and excited, burst into the room and stood before him.

"Father!" he exclaimed, impetuously, —"Fred Stanley saved your daughter's life. It is now in your power to return the obligation by saving his."

"Save his life! What do you mean, sir?" demanded his father, amazed and angry at this abrupt address.

"I mean that Fred Stanley is in prison, condemned to be shot to-morrow, and it is in your power to save him!" exclaimed his son with still increasing excitement.

"Shot to-morrow!" exclaimed Major Percival. "Good heavens! What has he done?"

"He joined the American cause, as you

know, and has been arrested and condemned as a spy," was the reply.

"Sorry to hear it—sorry to hear it!" said the major, shaking his head. "Stanley was a fine fellow, but I can do nothing for him. He deserves his fate!"

"And is this your gratitude to him for saving Edith's life?" said Percival, with flashing eyes.

"But what can I do, sir? I told you it was not in my power to help him," replied his father, in rising anger.

"You can help him, sir. Are you not the intimate friend of his father?"

"Well, and if I am?"

"Then go to him and plead for his son's life."

"Plead for his son's life! Are you crazy, Nugent? Doubtless all the influence Sir William possessed has been tried for his pardon before this."

"I tell you, father, it is Sir William himself who has condemned Fred to death!" exclaimed Percival, vehemently.

"What!" gasped Major Percival, starting back in horror—"condemned his own son? Impossible!"

"He has done so, horrible as it seems. Father, you will go to him and plead for a reprieve?"

"In such a case I certainly will. I'll go instantly! Who ever heard of such a thing? It absolutely makes one's blood run cold! He must pardon him!"

* * * * * * *

Sir William Stanley sat by the open window of his room, his head leaning on his hand, his brows knit as though in pain. The raw wind and chill rain beat unheeded on his bare head—a few hours seemed to have turned him into an old man.

He was thinking of his son, alone in his cold, gloomy cell—the last heir of his proud house condemned to die a traitor's ignominious death on the morrow! It was his own lips that had pronounced his doom, and though his sorrow and anguish were intense, those words should never be recalled.

Sir William was neither hard-hearted nor unnatural. That his son was a spy, and as such deserved death, was his conviction. He would not have condemned him unjustly; but having once found him guilty nothing could save him. Duty was the ruling principle of Sir William Stanley's life. It amounted almost to a monomania with him. Once convinced of what he considered his duty, no human consideration could induce him to swerve from it.

Therefore, he sat by the window, a bereaved, broken-hearted old man, bereaved by his own act. His affection for Frederic had never been very strong, but he was his son, after all; and now that he was about to lose him, he had never seemed so dear before. A thousand remembrances of him, that he had long forgotten, again rushed to his mind. He remembered him a wild, impetuous, handsome boy, ever rash, sometimes wayward, often fiery and headstrong, but always generous. Then, too, with him would perish the last scion of his ancient family—the disgrace of his shameful death would ever cling to himself; and Sir William bowed his face in his hands and groaned aloud.

Suddenly, a servant entered, and announced that Major Percival was below and desired to see him.

Sir William was in no humor to see visitors, but he could not refuse his old friend; so, composing his face until it assumed an expression of rigid firmness, he bade the servant show him up.

When the major entered the room, Sir William advanced to meet him with extended hand, his face looking as if it were made of cast iron, so stern and hard was it.

"To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit, major?" was his very unusual mode of addressing his friend.

"To a very unhappy circumstance, Sir William!" was the reply. "I allude to that affair of your son's."

Sir William's brow grew dark.

"Proceed!" he said, stiffly.

"I hear that you have condemned him to be shot as a spy!" said the major, nettled at the baronet's tone; "it is impossible, sir, you can have done so monstrous an act."

"Not at all impossible, Major Percival!" said Sir William, coldly. "I have condemned him to death."

"But you cannot mean to execute such a sentence. Good heavens, sir, you will not become the murderer of your own son!" exclaimed Major Percival, in a tone of horror.

"Major Percival, the young man is guilty! His is a double crime—he is a spy and a traitor. Sir, he deserves death!" said Sir William, with stately dignity.

"He is none the less your son!"

"Were he my father, sir, he should die!"

"Sir William Stanley, have you the heart of a fiend? Will you be barbarous, inhuman enough to condemn your only son to a disgraceful death? Zounds! sir! the very brutes of the forest would not be guilty of such a deed!"

"Sir, I trust I know my duty!"

"Duty!" exclaimed the passionate old man, "I tell you, Sir William Stanley, that sort of cant is ridiculous! Duty, forsooth! As if it were a man's duty to commit a civil murder—for it is murder, say what you will—because you fancy him a spy. I tell you, sir, if you slay you own son, his blood will cry out from the earth for vengeance on his murderer!"

Major Percival sprang from his seat,

and stood gesticulating, flushed, excited, fiery, before Sir William. The baronet's face seemed to be made of marble, for, though he rose to his feet, it was as calm and immovable as iron. There was something in that stern, still look that awed and subdued the fiery wrath of his more excitable companion.

"Major Percival," he said, and his voice sounded strangely impressive in its deep calmness, "I have listened to your words, and I forgive your insults, though, should they be repeated, my servants shall show you out. And now, sir, hear me; as well might you talk to this table, with the hope of winning it to answer you, as to plead for forgiveness for him. To-morrow, by dawn, he dies, and no power under heaven can save his life. You have my answer, sir."

He paused. His cold, impressive voice had stilled the excited feelings of the major. He felt his words were ill-chosen, and, with the determination of being more careful, he resolved to try again.

"Sir William," he began, "we are old friends, and I feel you will pardon words uttered in the heat of anger. I feel an interest, nay, an affection for your son; he saved my daughter's life at the risk of his own, and it is but natural I should plead for him."

A stiff bow and cold silence were his sole reply.

"Once again, then," continued the major, "I implore you to retract this sentence. Think of the long, cheerless old age before you, without the strong arm of a son to lean upon, without a relative on earth to close your eyes. For his dead mother's sake, sir, spare your son's life!"

A sudden start followed the abrupt words, and a spasm of intense agony passed over the face of the baronet. The major noticed it, and continued:

"You will pardon him, I am sure; your heart is not made of iron. For your own sake, my old friend, grant me this boon."

"Enough, sir!" interrupted the baronet, around whose mouth a look of immovable sternness had settled; "I will hear no more; you plead in vain. I know my duty, Major Percival. Frederic Stanley has been tried, and found guilty; and ere the sun rises to-morrow he shall die!"

There was an almost passionate solemnity in his tone. He looked as some Spartan hero of old might have done when about to sacrifice what was dearest to him on earth.

"Then, Sir William Stanley," said Major Percival, growing absolutely white with anger, "our friendship is forever at an end."

"As you please, sir," replied the baronet, with a stiff bow.

"Now, mark my words, unfeeling man!" said the major, with a solemnity almost equal to his own, "if you slay your own son you will repent it in dust and ashes. A miserable old age will be yours—shunned by men, and accursed by God!"

"Go!" said the baronet, white and choked with rage, as he held the door open and pointed out.

And, without a word, Major Percival took his hat and left the house.

* * * * * * * *

The chill, gray dawn of the morning looked with its pale, wan face on many scenes.

It beheld Edith Percival, after a restless night, kneeling with clasped hands by the window, praying for strength, and thinking of one now dearer than life itself. It saw Sir William Stanley, cowering in his room, white and ghastly, with an awful look of fixed, settled despair in his stony eyes, shrinking in horror as the moments flew by, bringing the dreaded hour nearer and nearer. It looked through the little grating, with its sad, pitiful eyes, into the lonely cell in which Fred Stanley was confined. He lay on the rude cot in a deep sleep—so still, so dreamless, that but for the deep, regular breathing, one might mistake it for death. His long, luxuriant locks fell darkly over his white brow, saddening the still, marble-like face. His was the profound slumber that follows strong excitement of any kind, and he looked so calm, so tranquil, that even the jailer shrank from awakening him, with a feeling akin to pity for his youth and sad fate.

But the noise of the creaking door aroused him. Starting up, he looked around him with a bewildered air. The narrow cell, that grated window, the hard-looking jailer, too soon brought memory back. He had slept for the last time. For a moment his face flushed deep crimson, then the blood retreated to his heart, leaving him paler than before.

"Why do you wait?" he demanded, turning to the jailer; "I am ready."

He rose to his feet as he spoke. Several men entered the cell; but he scarcely noticed them, as, murmuring a silent prayer for mercy, he proceeded to the courtyard.

Several soldiers with fixed muskets stood ready. At a little distance was Sir William Stanley; and no one, to look at his pale, but rigidly calm face, could dream of the intense anguish he endured.

A man advanced with a handkerchief, but, waving him back with an air of calm command, Fred said:

"Stand aside! I will not have my eyes bound."

"It matters not!" said Sir William, seeing the man hesitated. Then, turning

to the soldiers, he said: "When I give the word you will"—

He paused. With all his firm self-command, he could not finish the sentence.

"Kneel!" he said, turning sternly to Fred, but his face was like that of a corpse.

"Now," he added, turning to the others, and raising his arm, "fi"—

"Hold!" cried a voice, so deep, so sepulchral, that every one started; and the next moment the Hermit of the Cliffs stood before them.

CHAPTER X.

MAJOR PERCIVAL IN A "STATE OF MIND."

"Ah me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth."

—Shakespeare.

THERE was a moment's profound silence, and the group standing in the courtyard, in the gray dawn of the morning, might have formed a subject for a painter.

The soldiers, in a row, with gleaming muskets, presented, now motionless in surprise. Fred, still kneeling in momentary expectation of death—Sir William Stanley, transfixed with amazement, staring at the newcomer—and the hermit himself looking exactly the same as when Fred and Edith had met him on the cliffs.

"Who are you, sirrah?" demanded Sir William, who was the first to recover his presence of mind.

"No friend of yours, Sir William Stanley," replied the deep tones of the hermit.

"And how dare you venture here, man or madman, or whatever you may be?" cried the baronet, fiercely. "Away with you, or you shall repent this intrusion."

"Not at thy command will I go," replied the hermit, loftily. "No man on earth can make me do otherwise than as I please."

"Then, by all the fiends in flames, I will make you do otherwise," shouted the enraged baronet. "Here, some of you arrest this hoary dotard, until we teach him that our commands are not to be disobeyed with impunity."

"Back!" cried the hermit, waving his hand majestically. "Touch me not at your peril."

"Who is this old fool?" asked Sir William, angrily.

"One you have reason to fear, proud man," replied the calm voice of the hermit.

"Now, by heaven! this is too much!" exclaimed the baronet, fiercely. "What! have you all turned cowards, that no one dares raise a finger against this gray lunatic? Be off, old man; I do not wish to harm you. Do you hear?"

"On one condition, only, will I go," replied the hermit, folding his arms, and gazing steadily into the eyes of the angry baronet.

"Must I, then, make conditions with you?" said Sir William, sarcastically. "Pray, name it, most venerable father!"

"That you allow yonder kneeling youth to go forth free," was the calm reply.

For a moment Sir William's face grew absolutely black with rage. He stood quivering, speechless with suppressed passion.

"Nay, Sir William," said the old man, in a tone of conscious power. "There is no need to look so enraged. I can make you do it."

He walked over, as he spoke, to where the baronet stood, and whispered a few words in his ear. The effect was appalling. Sir William staggered back, with ghastly face and straining eyeballs, then, with one wild cry: "Oh, great Heaven!" the strong man fell stricken to the ground.

All were bewildered, amazed, terrified! Several rushed forward to raise the prostrate man, while the others surrounded Fred who had risen to his feet, under the vague impression that he was in some way about to escape. The hermit, as he passed him, whispered: "Fear not, you are safe!" And a moment after he was gone.

Fred was reconducted back to prison like one in a dream. What strange, mysterious power did this singular old man possess? He knew all the events of Fred's past life, seemingly, as well as he did himself; and in a few words had produced an effect upon Sir William Stanley such as no human being had ever done before. He could not account for it.

It seemed to Fred that that day would never come to an end. He paced up and down his narrow precincts until he was tired, and then threw himself on the wooden bench, forced to resign himself to the prospect of remaining another night in his dreary cell. He shortly afterward heard the key turning in the lock; and the next moment a tall, muffled figure stood in the doorway.

"Come with me," said a deep voice, that Fred easily recognized as his father's.

The young man arose and followed him through a long, dark corridor, until they reached the courtyard. Fred glanced around at it with a shudder.

"Go, you are free, said his conductor. And Fred noticed now for the first time how hoarse and unnatural was his voice. "Beware how you fall into my hands again! Go!"

Mechanically the young man obeyed;

and he found himself in the street like one who walks in his sleep, half tempted to believe the events of the past few days were nothing but a dream.

His first thought was whither he should direct his steps. He did not know where Nugent Percival was stopping, or he might have sought him out. And by a very natural transition, while thinking of the brother, the thoughts wandered to the sister, and he was just falling into a delightful day-dream of going to housekeeping with Edith, when a slap on the shoulder startled him, and, looking up, he saw a man by his side wrapped in a long, dark cloak.

"Whither now, Frederic Stanley?" said the well-known voice of the hermit.

"Oh, is it you?" said Fred, a little surprised by his sudden appearance. "This meeting is most fortunate. Sir, I owe you my life."

"I am aware of that," said the hermit, quietly.

"How can I show you my gratitude for what you have done? Believe me, I am not insensible to the great obligation under which you have laid me."

"Cease your thanks, young man," interrupted the hermit, in a tone of slight impatience. "The only return I ask is, that you will in all things be guided by my counsels. Nay," he added, seeing an irresolute expression on Fred's face, "believe me, I will ask you to do nothing inconsistent with your duty, or even your overweening pride."

There was a slight sarcasm in the last words. Fred felt half ashamed of his momentary hesitation.

"You may command me," he said. "I owe you more than I can ever repay. I do need some one," he added, sorrowfully, "to stand between me and my own headstrong passions. If you are, indeed, my friend—and I have every reason to believe it—I promise to be guided by your counsels."

Something like a look of pleasure shone in the eyes of the hermit. It quickly passed away, however, and when he again spoke his voice had resumed his usual quiet one.

"Come with me, then," said the hermit, passing his arm through that of the young man. "I have a friend residing here, with whom you can remain until you wish to depart."

Both walked rapidly and in silence for a short distance. Reaching, at length, a small but comfortable-looking inn, the hermit, who seemed familiar with the place, ordered a private room to be prepared, whither he repaired with his young companion.

"Well, sir," he began, seating himself, "may I ask what you intend doing with yourself?"

The question was so abrupt that Fred could not resist a smile.

"Really, sir," he replied, "I scarcely know how to answer you. In the first place, I intend to return to my regiment."

"Before you visit Percival Hall?" inquired the hermit, fixing his eyes with a peculiar expression on his companion's face.

Fred started and flushed. His first emotion was one of anger; but, quickly repressing it, he answered, somewhat coldly:

"I have no intention of going there. May I beg to know why you ask?"

"Come, come, my young friend," said the hermit, "no concealments from me, if you wish me to befriend you. You love Edith Percival?"

"I cannot deny it," replied Fred, half irritated by the abrupt question.

"And she is engaged to be married to another?"

"Yes," replied Fred, sternly.

"You have seen your rival?" continued the hermit.

Fred bowed.

"Are you aware he is your deadliest enemy?" said his strange questioner.

"Rivals are not usually very good friends," said the young man, scornfully. "It would be something new if we were not enemies."

"Young man, beware of him!" said the hermit, solemnly. "You have reason to fear his machinations."

Fred sprang to his feet, and dashed back his long, dark hair, as he exclaimed, impetuously:

"Fear! I fear no man living! Let him dare to meet me in open warfare, and I will teach him I am not to be insulted with impunity."

"Sir, sir, De Lisle is no honorable enemy. He will not meet you in open warfare. He is subtle and treacherous as a serpent—his vengeance will not be open, but it will be none the less deadly. You cannot guard against a foe who comes by stealth."

"Let him come," said Fred, scornfully. "I fear him not."

"Rash youth!" said the hermit, in a tone of mingled sorrow and anger. "You despise my warning."

"No, sir," replied Fred, resuming his seat. "I thank you for your warning, which, however, was scarcely needed. I am already aware that De Lisle is my bitterest foe, and I can assure you his dislike is returned with compound interest. I neither intend to seek him nor to avoid him; but should we meet in honorable combat, one or other of us shall fall."

There was a moment's silence, during which the hermit sat with his eyes cast down like one lost in thought.

"Does Major Percival know you love his daughter?" asked he, abruptly, looking up.

"No," said Fred, shrinking sensitively, as he always did, from discussing such a subject.

"Do you intend telling him?" continued his unwearying interlocutor.

"I do not know, sir. I must beg you will drop this subject," said Fred, with stern impatience.

"My young friend, do not be angry. I have the power, and, let me add, the will, to assist you. With the natural fiery impatience of youth you cannot brook any interference in this matter now, but, believe me, the day will come when you will not be so sensitive. Do you know Major Percival's present address!"

"No!" said Fred, eagerly. "And I am very anxious to see his son, too."

"This is it, then," said the hermit, writing as he spoke, on a card. "And now, farewell for the present. Make this your home while you stay here."

"Going so soon?" said Fred, rising, scarcely knowing whether he felt pleased or otherwise by his absence.

"Yes, I cannot now remain longer, but I shall watch over you—not as a spy on your actions, but as a friend who takes a deep interest in your welfare. Some day it will need no argument to convince you of this. Good night, my son."

He folded his cloak around him, bowed gravely, and was gone.

"Well, I must say," he observed, throwing himself in a seat, "of all the incomprehensible old gentlemen ever I met, this half-crazed, wonderfully wise Hermit of the Cliffs beats them all. Here he gives me a lecture as long as the moral law, and orders me about as though I were of no consequence at all; and I, who was always headstrong and rebellious, obey as meekly as though I were not old enough to judge for myself. That man is a mystery. I would give a trifle to know by what wonderful spell he saved my life. Telling me he will watch over me, too, as though I were a child. I am afraid if he watches over me too much I will be inclined to resist. There's Major Percival's address—I'll pay my respects there to-night; it is early yet."

So saying, he arose, took his hat, and quitted the house.

Becoming absorbed in his own thoughts again, he was quite unconscious how rapidly he was striding along until he struck against some one who was passing, so violently as nearly to knock him down.

"Better not try that again," said the angry voice of the person he ran against, as by seizing hold of a lamp-post he recovered his equilibrium.

"Nugent Percival!" exclaimed Fred, laughing; "don't you know me?"

"What!" exclaimed Percival, drawing back aghast, "Fred Stanley, by all that's wonderful! Can this be you, or is it only your ghost?"

"Myself, my dear Nugent, my veritable self," said Fred, passing his arm through his, and drawing him along, for Percival seemed too much astonished to move. "I have not the least hesitation in assuring you, I am myself—as good as a score of ghosts yet."

"Well, wonders will never cease!" said Percival, drawing a deep breath, and surveying his companion, as though still in doubt. "Here I was going along, bewailing your untimely end, when, lo! you start up as safe and sound as ever. My dear Fred, have compassion on me, and tell me how it all occurred. Did your father relent, as I told you he would?"

In as few words as possible, Fred related what had occurred. Percival listened with a look of the utmost wonder. "Phew!" was his comment when Fred ceased, with a long whistle of most sublime perplexity. "If the hermit is not Old Nick himself, he must be a near relation. What a providential escape! My father called to see Sir William, and came home in a towering passion because all his entreaties failed; and here this unknown, moonstruck lunatic, with a few words, has succeeded in what no other earthly being could have done."

Fred's mouth grew stern.

"I am sorry," he said, "your father degraded himself so much for me. I should not have valued a pardon thus extorted from him."

"Oh! well! never mind; it's all right now," said Percival, who seemed the very soul of good-nature. "My father will be rejoiced to hear of your escape. And those at home, too, thank heaven! we will not have to carry them such direful news."

"I wish, Percival," said Fred, looking slightly annoyed, "that you would not mention this affair to them when you return. It is all over now, and it might give—some of them pain. Promise me you will say nothing about it."

"Oh, certainly!" replied Nugent, "but they will be sure to hear it. De Lisle, of course, will find out all about it, and retail it to them with the greatest gusto."

"His only regret will be that I did escape," said Fred, biting his lip.

"I have no doubt; but, of course, you're too sensible a fellow to care. You'll return home with me, will you not?"

"No," said Fred, coldly, "I shall not trespass on your hospitality so soon again. My path of duty lies in another direction."

"Well, I wish you luck. And now we must part for an hour or so; for my path of duty at present lies up the next street. You know where to find my father; I will see you there when I return."

"Until then, adieu," said Fred, raising

his hat, and turning leisurely in the direction of the hotel.

A few moments brought him to it, and inquiring for Major Percival, he was shown at once to his room.

The major chanced to be thinking of him at the time—thinking of his relentless father, and the sad fate of the son in dying so young, when, hearing the door open, he suddenly looked up, and beheld the object of his thoughts standing in the doorway, so tall, and dark, and pale, that he might easily have mistaken him for a ghost. Starting to his feet, the major stood staring at him as though he doubted the evidence of his senses.

"You seem surprised, Major Percival," said Fred, advancing toward him. "I presume you expected ere this that I was numbered among the things that were."

"What!" he exclaimed, "do I really see alive before me Frederic Stanley?" And the major's face assumed a look of amazement most wonderful to behold.

Fred smiled at his perplexity, and once again repeated the tale of his narrow escape. The major listened with a look of utter bewilderment, now and then ejaculating: "Well, well!" "Jupiter!" "Wonderful!" and sundry other expressions of astonishment.

"And have you no idea who this Hermit of the Cliffs, as they call him, is?" he inquired, when Fred paused.

"None, sir. The man is a mystery to every one, and I believe is generally looked upon as a harmless madman."

"There seems to be method in his madness, however!" said the major, "it is indeed most wonderful what influence he can possess over your father! Sir William Stanley and I were schoolmates once, and intimate friends in after life. I saved his life once, and in his gratitude he promised that the first favor it would ever be in his power to grant to me should be given. The first I ever asked of him was to grant his own son his life—and it was angrily refused. Yet here at the last moment, a moonstruck maniac comes along, and at his first word your life is spared. Strange! Strange!"

"I fear it will always remain strange," said Fred, "neither my father nor the hermit is likely to reveal it. I fear there may be some crime connected with this mystery."

"Well, it is useless for us to perplex ourselves trying to find it out!" said the major. "And now, to change the subject. We return to Percival Hall to-morrow, and I beg you will accompany us."

"I thank you, Major Percival; but I must decline your invitation!" replied Fred.

"Oh, pooh! pooh! I'll take no refusal, you must come!" interrupted the major, heartily.

He looked up in the young man's face as he spoke, and was almost startled by its cold, proud expression.

"Come, my dear Stanley, do not refuse! You will spend a few days with us at least!" he said, courteously.

"I regret, sir, that I must refuse!" was the frigid reply.

"Well, if you will not come now," continued the major, who seemed in an unusually hospitable mood, "promise to do so in a few weeks. My daughter Edith is to be married about that time, and we should all like you to be present at the ceremony."

Fred had arisen as the other spoke; and now Major Percival looked up in bewilderment to see him looming up above him so high, so dark, so passionate-looking. He ceased speaking abruptly, and stood staring at him in wonder.

"Major Percival," said Fred, in a voice so deep and stern as quite to startle that worthy man, "I cannot return to Percival Hall, because I love your daughter. Wait one moment, sir, and hear me out!" he added, as the major sprang fiercely to his feet. "Miss Percival will, you say, in a few weeks be a bride; in that case we shall never meet again, so that I can speak without fear of misrepresentation. Since the first moment I saw your daughter, I loved her—loved her, too, knowing it to be hopeless, for she was then the betrothed bride of another."

"Sir, you're a villain, sir; yes, sir, a scoundrel, sir!" shouted the angry and deeply horrified major.

"One moment, sir," said Fred, with such frigid haughtiness as quite to overawe his excited companion; "my intention was never to mention this to any one, but the pressing invitations of both yourself and your son render it necessary. Sir, I am a man of honor, and as such could not again become a member of your family, knowing that your daughter loves me"—

"Do you dare to tell me this!" cried the major, growing absolutely purple with passion.

"Knowing that she loves me," continued Fred, with the same stern coldness as though the major had not spoken, "I could not return; and my continual refusal of your invitation might lead to misrepresentation. Therefore, sir, I have told you all; and now, to whatever you have to say I am ready to listen."

He folded his arms, and stood like a statue before him.

"My daughter love you, indeed! Sir, your conduct has been treacherous and dishonorable, sir, unworthy of a soldier and a man of honor, sir; yes, sir, even from a rebel I expected better conduct, sir!" exclaimed the enraged major. Fred did not reply, but stood erect, calm and

stern. "What business had you, sir," continued the major, still more vehemently, "to worm yourself into her affections? You knew she was betrothed to another; you knew I would sooner see her dead at my feet than the wife of a rebel, sir. Believing you to be an honorable young man, sir, although false to your king and country, I interceded with your father for your life as I never humbled myself to plead for any one before; and in return you coolly come here and boast that you have treacherously won the affections of my daughter, an inexperienced girl. Sir, I repeat it, you're a villain, sir."

The major seemed to have forgotten, in his rage, that though he had interceded in vain for Fred's life, that young man had saved the life of his daughter.

Still Fred, by a mighty effort, listened to his insults without speaking, or betraying even that he heard his words save by the intensely scornful light in his eyes.

"And now, sir," again began the major, absolutely maddened by the contemptuous silence of his listener, "I never wish to see your face again! Never presume, sir, to see my daughter more; begone, sir! there is the door! I expected something different from you, but I have been disappointed."

He flung himself into a chair as he spoke, and began wiping the perspiration from his heated and inflamed face.

Fred took his hat, and turning toward the door, said:

"Your kind and gentlemanly words, Major Percival, will not soon be forgotten. With many thanks for past courtesies, which I regret should have been lavished on so unworthy an object, I have the honor to bid you good night."

He bowed with most ceremonious politeness, and was gone. Despite all his outward calmness, his brain was throbbing and burning as though on fire, and his passionate heart was seething with fiery scorn and the bitter sense of wrong and insult, which must be tamely borne.

As he stepped out into the moonlight, a hand was laid upon his shoulder. Something of what was passing in his mind must have displayed itself on his face, for Nugent Percival exclaimed, in a voice of alarm:

"Stanley, my dear fellow, where are you going?"

"To perdition!" was the passionate reply.

"For heaven's sake, Fred, don't look so wild," said Nugent, "tell me what has happened. Have you told my father?"

"Yes," interrupted Fred, fiercely, "I have told him all, and been loaded with abuse and insult such as no other man under heaven would have dared to heap upon me. And all because I loved his daughter. Am I not her equal? Answer me that. Am I not as worthy of her as that cutthroat, De Lisle? Tell me, for I have a right to know!"

He clutched Percival's arm with the grip of a madman, and glared upon him with his excited eyes.

"My dear Stanley, do not talk so! You look as though you were crazed. Come with me for a walk—the cool air will restore you to yourself," said Nugent, soothingly.

He passed his arm through Fred's, and drew him with him down the street. The cool night air did indeed soothe him; and after walking a short way in silence, Fred said, more calmly:

"Forgive me, Percival, I knew not what I was saying. But to be obliged to stand there, and listen to his insults—I, who never bore a taunt from any man—was maddening. I spoke to him as coolly, Percival, as you could have done, even though every word he uttered stung me to the very soul."

His eyes blazed, and his face grew livid at the remembrance.

"Do not think of his words; they were uttered in a moment of passion. Believe me, no one will regret them more than himself, when he reflects upon what he has said. There, my dear fellow, do not excite yourself; you look as though you were delirious."

"My head aches as though red-hot wires were passing through it," said Fred, removing his hat, and shaking back his hair off his burning brow, while the fierce light slowly died out in his eyes, as he listened to the soothing voice of his friend.

"Hasten to your lodgings, then; you require rest and repose," said Nugent. "Come, I will accompany you. To-night you are wild and excited; to-morrow you will be a different man."

"To-morrow I trust I shall be far from here," said Fred.

"We leave to-morrow, likewise," said Percival; "so we will probably not meet again for a while. Here we are at your stopping-place. So, wishing the world may go well with you until we meet again, I will bid you good-by."

"Farewell, my dear friend," said Fred, wringing his hand. And the two friends parted.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ABDUCTION.

"She stands as stands the stricken deer,
Checked midway in the fearless chase;
When bursts upon her eye and ear
The gaunt, gray robber, baying near
Between her and her hiding-place;
While, still behind, with yell and blow,
Sweeps like a storm the coming foe."

—Whittier.

MEANTIME, how was it with Edith and our friends at Percival Hall?

From the day of the departure of Fred, De Lisle was most devoted in his attentions to his betrothed. Never before had he appeared so deeply in love—never had he been so devoted—never had he been so urgent that she should name an early day for their marriage. The fact of his having a rival had made him more resolved than ever to compel Edith to fulfil her engagement—an engagement from which he saw, with fierce anger, she shrank with ill-concealed loathing. The cause was to him only too plain, and he inwardly vowed that once she was his wife, and her fortune his, he would make her repent this visible dislike.

The other members of the family were too much absorbed by themselves to pay much attention to Edith. And her lover, Gus, who seemed suddenly to have forgotten his patriotism, was continually tied to the apron-string of Nell—happy, or jealous, or irritated, according to the whim of that capricious young lady. Mrs. Percival, who was nearly always absorbed in the mysteries of canvas and Berlin wool, left the young people to their own devices. And so Edith was forced to submit to the hateful attentions of De Lisle.

Edith had never been so deeply distressed before. There was no one in whom she could confide. She dared not even mention the secret of her attachment to her mother or sister. Her father was soon to return; and then she felt sure De Lisle would so influence him with his specious reasoning that he would insist upon her marrying him immediately. But gentle and yielding as Edith naturally was, and much as she feared her father, she had a fund of natural firmness—an unbending determination, which few gave her credit for. She might never see Fred again; but she was firmly resolved to die sooner than marry De Lisle.

But in the meantime she shunned and detested her suitor as much as possible. She could catch, at times, the fierce gleam of his eye as her voice would involuntarily become cold when he addressed her, or she would shrink from taking his proffered arm. And so, troubled by the present and dreading the future, Edith grew silent, and pale, and restless, passing her nights in tears and sighs instead of slumber.

Seating herself at her chamber window one night, her head leaning on her hand, Edith was lost in thought, when the door opened, and Nell, in dressing-gown and slippers, entered.

"Why, Edith! what have you done to De Lisle?" exclaimed Nell. "I saw him go off, looking as cross as a bear, a few moments ago. Seems to me you and he don't agree so well as you used to. What did you say to him?"

"Nothing," replied Edith.

"Well, I'd advise you to say something next time," said Nell, "and not drive the poor fellow to distraction. I declare, Edith, I never knew the like of you and Ralph—you're forever making him angry. Now, there's Gus and I, we get along swimmingly together. Love us! If you quarrel in this manner after you're married, I don't know what sort of a life you'll lead."

Edith's face was hidden by her fallen hair, and Nell could not see the expression of her face. After a pause, that young lady returned.

"I heard mamma and De Lisle talking about the wedding to-night. Papa has sent word that he will be at home in a day or two, and has got some new crotchet into his head; for he says he wishes the marriage to take place immediately. De Lisle is wonderfully pleased about it, too; he was awfully jealous when Mr. Stanley was here. O, Edith! wasn't he a splendid-looking fellow?"

But to Nell's surprise, Edith only buried her face in her hands, and wept convulsively.

"Why, bless me! what's the matter? Have I said anything to hurt your feelings? Tell me, what is it, Edith?" said Nell, winding her arms around her sister's neck. "What are you crying for?"

"Ellen, I'm so wretched," sobbed Edith.

"Wretched! what about? Don't you want to marry De Lisle?" asked Nell.

"No, no; no, no! O Nell! I hate even to think of it," said Edith, wringing her hands.

"Well, now that's odd," said Nell, meditatively. "Why, I thought you liked him!"

"Like him! Heaven forgive me—I almost hate him!" said Edith, with a shudder.

"La!" ejaculated Nell, "whom do you like then? Edith, Edith! is what Ralph says true?—do you love Fred Stanley?"

Edith hid her face in her falling hair, and answered only by a shivering sob. Nell's gay face wore a half-puzzled, half-troubled, half-pleased look.

"Well, Edith," she said, after a little thoughtful pause, "do you know I'm more than half glad you don't care for De Lisle? He's a jealous, suspicious fellow, and not half good enough for you. My! just see him alongside Mr. Stanley; why, he looks a mere puppy, compared with him. Really, if it wasn't for poor dear Gus, I'd be desperately in love with him myself."

Edith tipped her head, and gave her sister such a radiant look of gratitude, that the latter was quite startled.

"But, O Nell! what shall I do?" said Edith, in distress.

"Do?" said Nell, with a look of surprise. "Why, refuse him, of course!"

"But papa—he will be so angry!"

"Yes. I know, oh! he'll be awful. But, la! that's no reason why you should marry De Lisle, if you don't like him. He can't kill you, you know; and so you'll get off. You needn't care for a scolding."

"O Nell! I dare not; I am afraid."

"Afraid!" repeated Nell, contemptuously. "Edith, I wouldn't be such a coward as you for all the world. Afraid, indeed! Oh! don't I wish it was me they wanted to marry! Wouldn't I tell them a piece of my mind, and just let them storm as much as they liked. I'd walk up to the altar and marry a fellow I detested, because papa and the gentleman himself desired it? Oh! wouldn't I, though?" And Nell whirled round in an ironical pirouette.

"But you know, Nell, papa is so violent."

"Violent? Fiddlesticks! You be violent, too; that's the way to do it. Put your arms akimbo, and tell them all up and down you won't have him; and if De Lisle gets mad, and tears would tell him you are sorry for him—but he's too late for supper."

"O Nell, you know I couldn't do that!" said Edith.

"No!" said Nell, sarcastically, "no; but you could go and marry one man while you love another. Well, do as you please; and the first time I see Fred Stanley I'll tell him he has had a lucky escape. Such a timid thing as you are would be the last a high-spirited fellow like him should marry."

"Sister, how can you be so cruel?" said Edith, weeping.

"Bother! You'd provoke a saint. Thank the stars I'm able to defend myself. Come, Edith," she added, more gently, "be a man! Dry your eyes, and don't make a goose of yourself. Tell De Lisle to-morrow you won't have him; tell him you can't bear him, and that you wouldn't marry him if he was the last man in the world. He'll be mad, and make a fuss, of course—there wouldn't be any fun in it if he didn't. Then, when papa comes home, tell him the same, and stick to it. Of course, they'll all tear round, and be in a great way at first; but, after a while things will settle down again—'after a storm there cometh a calm,' you know. Lor, Edith, I wish I was in your place, for the time being; I wouldn't want better fun."

The energetic and vigorous spirit of the little black-eyed Amazon seemed gradually to communicate itself to her more timid sister. As she ceased, Edith sat erect, pale, but collected.

"You are right, Ellen!" she said, slowly, as she gathered up her disordered tresses. "Would to heaven I had your fearless spirit! but since I have not, I must nerve my own to bear the trial."

"Bravo, Edith, my dear!" exclaimed Nell, delightedly.

"Yes," continued Edith, like one thinking aloud, "there is no other way of avoiding the detested marriage. Beside, I promised him I would!"

"Promised whom?" said Nell, opening her eyes.

"Never mind, my dear," said Edith, smiling and blushing; "leave me now. Good night. To-morrow you will find I have taken your advice."

Nell laughed, and, after kissing Edith, left the room.

Edith passed an almost sleepless night. Naturally timid, she shrank from the disclosure she felt herself obliged to make, knowing well the violent scene that would assuredly follow. But since there was no alternative, she determined to brave the worst at once, and seek an interview with De Lisle the next morning.

An opportunity was not long wanting. Entering the library in search of a book, after breakfast the following day, she beheld De Lisle seated at the window, his head leaning on his hand, gazing moodily out. He started to his feet as he beheld her, while poor Edith, her heart throbbing like a frightened bird, turned first red and then pale, and then red again, feeling that the dreaded moment had at length come.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Miss Edith," said De Lisle, placing a chair for her.

She acknowledged his greeting by a slight inclination of the head, and stood with one hand resting on the back of the chair, scarcely knowing how to begin.

"Is it not a pity to spend such a lovely morning in the house?" said De Lisle. "What do you say to a ride?"

"Excuse me," said Edith, feeling more and more embarrassed; "I do not feel inclined for riding this morning."

"You are not ill, I hope?" observed De Lisle, somewhat anxiously. "You are looking very pale!"

"I am quite well, thank you," answered Edith, shrinking still more from the task before her.

"I am rejoiced to hear it," said De Lisle. Then, after a pause, he added, abruptly: "I presume you have heard your father and Nugent are coming home to-morrow?"

"To-morrow?" echoed Edith. "So soon?"

"So it seems. Your mother received a letter from the major last night."

"Mr. De Lisle," began Edith, desperately. "I have—that is, I wish—to"—Edith paused, while her heart throbbed so loudly she grew almost frightened.

De Lisle bowed respectfully, and stood waiting with calm attention for what was to follow.

"In a word, Mr. De Lisle," she re-

sumed, rapidly, thinking it best to be brief, "it is impossible for me to fulfil my engagement. Sir, I cannot marry you!"

Her voice trembled a little, but she looked boldly into his face, which was rapidly darkening.

"What!" he said, slowly, "break your engagement? Have I understood you aright, Miss Percival?"

"You have, sir," she answered, growing calm and fearless, now that the worst was over.

"And for what cause, may I ask?" he said, with outward calmness, though his face was absolutely white with suppressed passion.

"Because I do not love you," was the answer.

"And because you do love that handsome rebel, Master Fred Stanley. Is it not so, fair lady," he asked, with a bitter sneer.

The blood flushed hotly to Edith's face, and for a moment her eye fell before that dark, scathing glance. It was only for a moment, and then she looked almost defiantly up into his face.

"You are at liberty to assert what you please, sir. I will not contradict you. But I repeat it: I cannot—will not be your wife."

"That remains to be seen, Miss Edith," he answered, with a mocking smile. "How do you suppose your father will listen to such an independent assertion?"

"He will be very angry, doubtless," said Edith; "but, in this case, even his anger cannot move me. I cannot vow to love and honor one for whom I cherish no affection, nor ardent emotion. It would be doing injustice to you, to myself, and to"—

"Fred Stanley—why do you hesitate, my dear young lady?" said De Lisle, with his evil sneer.

"Sir, I will not remain here to be insulted!" exclaimed Edith, indignantly, turning toward the door.

"Ah! so you do consider it an insult to have your name coupled with that of that rebel, Stanley? I am glad to hear you have so much sense left, at least," said De Lisle.

Edith, whose hand was already on the handle of the door, turned at his words, and confronted him with glowing cheeks and flashing eyes, while she exclaimed, vehemently:

"No! Ralph De Lisle. I do not consider it an insult to be named with him. And now I tell you, since you have driven me to it, that I do love him, and him alone. Yes; I am proud to own it, and I never will marry any one save him!"

"We shall see," said De Lisle, with the same cold sneer with which he had spoken throughout. "I have very serious doubts as to whether the young gentleman alluded to is not by this time in a better world. As for this little scene, it is very well done indeed; meantime, you had better prepare for your wedding. Pass on, fair lady."

He held the door open, and bowed her out with most ceremonious politeness. Without deigning to notice him, Edith hurried away to her room, and, burying her face in her hands, burst into a passion of tears.

And three hours after, making some plausible excuse, De Lisle left Percival Hall to join the major.

The following day the twain arrived (Major Percival and De Lisle), business still retaining Nugent in the city.

It was evident to Edith that De Lisle must have prejudiced her father against her, for her greeting was returned with cold sternness, very unlike his wonted manner. But even this coldness aided Edith, for had he met her with affectionate caresses, her resolution might have faltered. As it was, her pride and a sense of injustice sustained her, and with the determination of dying sooner than marrying De Lisle, she awaited the scene that was yet to come. Not long had she to wait. The following evening, Edith, who had absented herself from the supper-table, was summoned to the parlor, where, seated in state, were Major Percival and his lady, De Lisle, and Nell.

"Be seated, Miss Percival," said the major, with overwhelming dignity.

The color deepened on Edith's cheek as she obeyed.

"Hem!" began the major; "you are aware, I presume, that in a few weeks you are to become the bride of De Lisle, here?"

"I was to have been his bride, papa," murmured Edith.

"Was, Miss Percival, was?" said the major, severely. "You are to be, you mean!"

"I cannot, sir!" said Edith, though her voice faltered a little.

"You cannot!" repeated Major Percival, with an ominous frown gathering on his brow.

"No, sir!"

"But I say yes!" exclaimed the major, vehemently, springing to his feet. "You shall be his wife. I command you!"

"Then, sir, it will be my painful duty to disobey you!" said Edith, with a heightened color, as she also rose.

"My dear," said Mrs. Percival, laying her hand gently on her husband's arm, "do not be violent. We can wait; give Edith time—do not be angry with her now."

The words so softly spoken subdued the fiery wrath of the major. The fearless demeanor of Edith, so different from all he had ever known of her, also had

some effect upon him. Seating himself, therefore, in his chair, he growled:

"Time! the minx may have as much time as she likes, if it will only bring her to a reasonable frame of mind."

"Oh! thank you, papa," said Edith; "but I can never"—

"Major Percival," interrupted De Lisle, who had listened in angry astonishment, "am I to understand our marriage will not take place at the appointed time?"

"Why, De Lisle, you hear what that vixen says!"

"But, sir, you should insist," said De Lisle, rising angrily. "I protest against this decision!"

"Protest and be hanged!" said the major, growing angry in his turn. "Am I to be ordered by you, sir? Edith Percival shall wait as long as she pleases; and you may consider yourself fortunate to get her in the end!" And the major, happy to find some one to vent his wrath on, turned furiously on De Lisle.

"Sir I will not wait!" exclaimed De Lisle, passion and disappointment for the time overcoming prudence. "Your daughter was to have been my wife at the expiration of three weeks, and I now insist on it as my right!"

"'Insist,' do you?" thundered the major. "You impertinent scoundrel! if you say another word I'll cancel the engagement altogether, and you may go whistle for a wife!" And he brought his clenched fist down with such a thump on the table that every one jumped.

De Lisle bit his lip and was silent. Convinced by this time how unwisely he had acted, he resolved to adopt a different course. Assuming, therefore, a penitent tone, he said:

"Pardon me, sir; my feelings have carried me beyond the bounds of moderation. I bow to your superior judgment and will bear my disappointment as best I may."

The major rather stiffly acknowledged his apology — while Edith, pleading a headache, hurried from the room. In a few moments she was joined by Nell.

"Well. 'Dith, what did I tell you?" exclaimed that young lady. "You see the trial's over, and you're in the land and living yet. My! did you see how mortified De Lisle looked, though? It's my opinion his penitence was all a sham. I never saw angrier eyes in any one's head than his were all the time he was speaking so respectfully and humbly. Oh! there's Gus in the garden; I'm going down to tease him. Bon soir!" And Nell bounded from the apartment.

All the next day De Lisle maintained a respectfully reserved manner toward Edith and the major. This evidently produced a deep impression on the mind of the latter, though Edith plainly perceived it was assumed. The following evening, as Edith stood on the piazza, gazing out into the still moonlight, De Lisle approached and, touching his hat, said:

"Good evening, Miss Edith, you are looking charming in the pale moonlight. What do you say to a drive this lovely night? My carriage is at the door."

"Thank you," said Edith, coldly, "I prefer remaining where I am."

"What's that?" said the major, who now appeared.

"I ordered my carriage, sir, thinking Miss Percival might feel inclined for a drive this fine night. She, however, refuses," said De Lisle.

"Nonsense, Edith," said the major, angrily, "you are growing as obstinate as a mule. Away with you and get ready; and don't let the grass grow under your feet."

Edith could no longer disobey. She accordingly entered the house, and soon reappeared in carriage costume. De Lisle handed her, with the most respectful gallantry, into the carriage and they dashed off behind a splendid pair of bays.

For upward of an hour they drove on, almost in silence, Edith replying to all De Lisle's observations only in monosyllables. Still, he showed no sign of returning.

"Let us go back, Mr. De Lisle," said Edith, at length; "the air is very cold."

"Wrap this shawl around you," said De Lisle; "I am anxious to show you something a little farther on?"

He folded the shawl carefully around her, while she submitted in silence; and again they dashed forward more swiftly than before. Half an hour passed, and still he showed no symptoms of returning.

"Mr. De Lisle," said Edith, impatiently, "I wish to go home. Will it please you to return?"

"In one moment," said De Lisle, as he suddenly reined in the horses, and gave a loud, peculiar whistle.

"Sir! what does this mean?" asked Edith, in alarm.

He turned and gazed upon her for a moment with an evil smile, but said nothing. An instant after, two men stood holding the bridle-reins of the horses.

"Ralph De Lisle," said Edith, in increasing terror, "what means this?"

"It means, fairest Edith, that Fred Stanley, when he comes to woo, will have to select another wife than Miss Percival!"

"Sir, sir! I do not comprehend you," said Edith, growing sick and faint with terror.

"Do you not? Listen then, Edith; you must come with me. When next you see Percival Hall, it shall be as the wife of Ralph De Lisle!"

In the clear moonlight his face re-

sembled that of a demon. The truth burst at once upon Edith with stunning force, and with one wild, shrill cry of terror, she sank back in her seat and the dark night of insensibility closed around her.

CHAPTER XII.

IN CAPTIVITY.

"When first, with all a lover's pride,
I woo'd and won thee for my bride,
I little thought that thou wouldst be
Estranged as now thou art from me."
—Anon.

WHEN Edith again opened her eyes she found herself lying on a couch with some one bending over her, chafing her cold hands and temples. Her eyes wandered wildly around until they rested upon the detested form of De Lisle, who stood leaning lightly against the mantelpiece. Pushing away the hands that rested on her forehead, she raised herself on her elbow and gazed with a bewildered air around.

"Leave the room, Elva," said De Lisle, carelessly, without moving.

Edith heard the door open, but before she could look around it closed again and she was alone with De Lisle.

"Where am I? what means this, sir?" exclaimed Edith, springing to her feet with an overpowering but undefined sense of terror.

"That you must favor us with your presence in this old building for a week or so, Miss Edith," said De Lisle, carelessly.

"Do you mean, sir, that I am a prisoner?" demanded Edith, growing very pale.

"Exactly so, my dear," replied the young man.

"You cannot—you will not—you dare not!" exclaimed Edith, vehemently.

"Dare not!" he repeated, with a sinister smile.

"Yes, sir. I repeat it, you would not venture to detain me here a prisoner."

"We shall see," he said, carelessly.

"Mr. De Lisle, I command you to release me."

"Command away, then; I like to hear you," said De Lisle, with the utmost nonchalance.

"Sir, if you are a man of honor, you will restore me to my father!" exclaimed Edith, still more vehemently.

"That I will do with pleasure when you are my wife."

"I will never be your wife, sir; I would die first!" she said, indignantly.

"Indeed, fairest Edith," he said, with a sneer, "perhaps you will not find it so easy to die as you imagine. Most young ladies of your age would infinitely prefer marriage to death."

"Ralph De Lisle, are you lost to all sense of honor?—forcing a girl to marry you against her will! Oh, shame!"

"Honor!" said De Lisle, bitterly, "that word sounds well on your lips, fair lady. It was, doubtless, very honorable in you to break your plighted faith and surrender your heart to the next who asked you for it. Take care, pretty Edith, those who live in glass houses should not throw stones."

Edith sank back in her seat and, covering her face with her hands, wept with mingled fear and indignation. De Lisle stood watching her for a moment with a most sinister smile—then, turning to the door, he said:

"Farewell for the present, Miss Percival; I shall send a girl to attend to you by and by. I shall have the happiness of seeing you again during the course of the day."

He closed the door and was gone. Edith heard the sounds of bolts drawing without and felt she was indeed a prisoner in the hands of the man she detested. Oh! where was Nugent?—where was Fred then? She sobbed in a perfect passion of grief until her overcharged heart had had its way and she gradually grew calm.

"I will die sooner than marry him," she exclaimed, vehemently. "He will find I am not to be intimidated by his threats—that I have spirit enough, when roused, to resist injustice."

Her cheeks flushed and the sparkling light in her eyes bespoke her determination. Feeling more composed, she glanced around the apartment with some curiosity.

It was a long, square room, with a very low ceiling, festooned elegantly with cobwebs. In one corner stood a bed, without curtains, covered with a coarse but clean quilt. Opposite this stood a table, a wooden chest and a chair. This, together with the couch on which she sat, comprised the furniture of the room. The floor was uncarpeted and the one solitary window uncurtained.

Edith walked to the window and looked out. The iron grating outside destroyed the faint hope of escape which had begun to spring up in her breast. The room was in the second or third story, judging by its distance from the yard below. The prospect on which she gazed was dreary beyond description. The dull-gray dawn of morning was creeping sluggishly over the hills with its spectral feet. A thick, drizzling rain was falling; and the wind, as it sighed around the old house, sounded inexpressibly dismal. The view from the window was not very extensive—being bounded by tall trees, from which she judged it was situated in the forest. A high wall surrounded the wet, littered yard below; and, altogether, a more uncomfortable place—both within and

without—could scarcely have been found than the prison of Edith.

Drawing her chair close to the window, Edith sat down and tried to think. It was a difficult matter; for her head throbbed and ached until her brain was in a perfect chaos. While she sat, she was startled to hear the bolts clumsily withdrawn; and, raising her eyes, Edith beheld an object that made her spring to her feet in terror.

It was a short, stooping, shriveled, toothless, blear-eyed old woman, palsy-stricken and frightfully ugly. In her long, claw-like hands she held a tea-tray containing Edith's breakfast. This, after closing the door, she deposited on the table, and then turned slowly round until she fixed her little, sharp, red eyes on the shrinking Edith. A cap with an enormous frill, that kept continually flapping about her face, considerably heightened her charms; and this, together with a woolen gown, reaching barely to her ankles and so remarkably narrow that she evidently found some difficulty in walking in it, completed her costume.

"Here's your breakwis, ma'am," said this singular old crone, in a voice uncommonly like the shrill screech of a parrot; "there's coffee and toast—too good, a great sight, for such a chalk-faced whipper-snapper as you are. Ugh! whatever he wanted a-bringing of you here I can't tell."

"Who are you?" asked Edith, beginning to recover from her fright.

"What?"

"Who—are—you?" said Edith, speaking as loudly as possible, and fully convinced the old woman must be deaf.

"Me! Oh! um!—yes! Why, I'm Miss Crow, housekeeper and superintendent for Master Ralph. Yes! um!—take your breakwis, ma'am, will yer?"

"I don't feel hungry," said Edith; "you may take it away again."

"Hungry!" screeched Miss Crow, who had the faculty of only catching one word at a time; "well, if yer hungry why don't you eat—eh?"

"I am—not hungry," said Edith, exerting herself to speak loud, until she turned quite red in the face.

"Oh, you're not?" cried the amiable old lady. "Why couldn't you say so at once, and not keep me a-waitin', a-wastin' of my precious time and spillin' of good victtis? Pugh! I's disgusted. Wait till Miss Crow trots herself off her legs a-bringing of your breakwis ag'in—that's all!"

And, with a grimace that made her look positively hideous, Miss Crow gathered up the untasted "breakwis" and hobbled out of the room.

Left to herself, Edith resumed her seat by the window, inwardly wondering if this pleasing attendant was the young girl promised her by De Lisle. She felt she was surrounded by his creatures, whose hearts were steeled against her. Then, by a natural transition, her thoughts wandered home to her friends. She felt sure they were even then looking for her. But would she ever be discovered in this isolated old house? Or, even if discovered, would not De Lisle force her into a marriage with him beforehand?

Absorbed in such thoughts, the forenoon wore away; and, as noon approached, she was once more honored by a visit from Miss Crow, who came with the tray again.

"Here's your dinner, ma'am," said the little old woman, with her customary screech. "I hopes as how you'll eat it, and not go bringing of me up-stairs for nothin' again, which is what I ain't noways used to. Pity if such a big lazy thing as you are can't wait on herself, and not go bringing ageable old women like I is up two or three flights of stairs, with the rheumatiz in the small of my back." And here the screech subsided into a groan.

"I am sorry to be a trouble to you," said Edith, seating herself at the table.

"Trouble!" cried Miss Crow, spitefully; "so you think it's no trouble, do you? But I'll let you know it is. And Master Ralph may wait on you hisself; though I s'pose you'd sooner have a fine young fellow like that to 'tend to you than an old woman like Miss Crow."

Edith, not being inclined to shout a reply, ate her dinner in silence, while Miss Crow stood watching her with her red, inflamed eyes, strangely reminding Edith of the witches in Macbeth.

"Mr. Ralph told me he was coming to see you in the course of half an hour," said the old woman, after a pause; "though what he can want with such a baby-faced thing as you are, I don't know."

Here Miss Crow paused, as though she expected to be told, but Edith made no reply.

"What'll I tell him?" inquired the old lady, sharply.

"Nothing," said Edith.

"What?"

"You may tell him I don't want to see him," said Edith, raising her voice.

"Want to see him!—hum! hum!—want to see him! Yes, I'll tell him so," replied Miss Crow, rather complacently.

"I don't want to see him—do you hear? I don't want to see him!" said Edith, still more loudly.

Sundry unearthly sounds, which the old woman took to be a laugh, followed this reply; and, still chuckling to herself, she gathered up the things and left the room.

Scarcely had she departed, when De Lisle entered. Advancing into the room,

he threw himself indolently on the couch and, turning to Edith, he remarked, carelessly:

"I'm afraid old Nan Crow is not the most pleasant attendant in the world. You won't be troubled with her long, however; to-morrow, Elva Snowe will take her place."

Edith made no reply, but sat listening, in haughty silence.

"The day after to-morrow, fairest Edith, will make me the happiest of men. I have made every arrangement for our marriage, which will take place on that day. My only regret is that it must be delayed so long."

"Sir, must I tell you again I will never be your bride?" said Edith—a sudden crimson staining her fair face, and then retreating, leaving her paler than before.

"No!" said De Lisle, with a quiet smile. "Never is a long time, my dear Edith."

"You cannot force me to marry you, even though I am your prisoner," said Edith.

"Can I not? There are ways of compelling you that you dream not of, perhaps," was the cool reply.

"Sir, your conduct has been most base and unmanly—most evil and treacherous. If you have one spark of honor remaining in your heart, you will release me!" exclaimed Edith, rising, with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes.

"Never, Edith!" he said, fiercely, "never shall you cross this threshold unless as my wife. You talk about honor, forsooth! Did I not love you, as I never cared for mortal before on this side of heaven? were you not my betrothed bride? was not our wedding-day fixed?—when lo! a dashing stranger comes along, and I am coolly told to stand aside, for I am loved no longer!—told to stand aside and wait—wait until my rival shall have wormed himself into the good graces of the family, and become your accepted lover! One consolation is, that long before this he must have been hung as a traitor."

Edith essayed to speak, but her voice failed; and, sinking into a seat, she buried her face in her hands and wept passionately.

"After that interview with your father," went on De Lisle, with increasing bitterness, "I urged him repeatedly to revoke his decision, and insist on the marriage, but in vain. And, at length, he commanded me to drop the subject altogether, and told me I should wait until it pleased him to appoint the time. You see, fairest Edith, I have done so." And he laughed sarcastically. "Your worthy father may search until he is tired; but I doubt if he will discover you here. Once my wife, and he will not dare to proclaim the deeds of his son-in-law to the world. Your fortune will be mine. I will not attempt to disguise from you, Miss Percival, that this forms no unimportant item in my calculations. Your fortune once mine, you may return to your father's house as soon as you please."

"Release me now," said Edith, looking up; "and, since it is only my money you want, I will persuade my father to give it all to you."

"Nay, Miss Edith, I must decline your kind offer. I am inclined to think your good father would prefer handing me over to the civil authorities rather than to his banker. And a still more weighty consideration remains; you love the man I hate—yes, hate!" And his face grew livid with passion. "The best revenge I can take is, by marrying you—whether with or without your consent, matters not. Thus I will raise an insuperable barrier between you and gratify my revenge."

Edith shuddered involuntarily. He stood watching her, with his habitual sinister smile.

"I thought that would touch you," he said, with a sneer. "Remember, the day after to-morrow is your wedding-morning. The girl I spoke of will assist you to dress for your bridal. Au revoir." And, turning on his heel, De Lisle quitted the room.

CHAPTER XIII.

ELVA SNOWE.

"I see a little merry maiden,
With laughing eye and sunny hair—
With foot as free as mountain fairy,
And heart and spirit light as air."
—Anon.

THE gray daylight was fading out of the dull sky. The wind sounded inexpressibly dreary as it moaned through the dark, fragrant pines. Far in the west, a red, fiery streak glowed among the dark, leaden clouds, like a burning line dividing heaven and earth. Dreary and sad was the scene without; but more dreary and sad were the thoughts of Edith as she sat watching the approach of night. The gloom around and above was congenial to her feelings; and, lost in thought, she heeded not the waning hours, until all within and without was wrapped in a mantle of pitchy darkness.

The entrance of Nan Crow, with her supper and a light, roused her at last. The old woman seemed unusually cross and out of humor; and, after essaying in vain to make her answer her questions, Edith relapsed into silence. With a sharp command not to "sit moping there like a ghost, a-burning of candles, but to go to bed," she went out, slamming the door violently after her. Her command was unheeded; for, seated at

the window—her burning forehead pressed against the cold panes, Edith remained till morning. It was a strange scene—that long, shadowy room, so poorly furnished, and that young girl seated at the window, her face whiter than the robe she wore. The candle fluttered and burned dimly, with a long black wick, capped by a fiery crest, until it went out altogether, leaving the room enveloped in the deepest gloom.

So passed the second night of Edith's captivity. Morning found her pale, spiritless, and utterly despairing. She knew well De Lisle would keep his word. And what could she—a weak, powerless girl—do to prevent him? Naturally timid and accustomed to magnify dangers, she could see nothing but despair, look which way she would. To rebel would be useless; and, without an effort, she yielded to utter dejection. At times she could be brave enough, when laboring under excitement of any kind; or when, after listening to her vehement sister, she would imbibe part of her spirit; but these rare intervals were always followed by a listlessness and timidity greater than before.

The sun arose in unclouded splendor. Every trace of the former day's dullness had passed away, and nature once more looked bright and beautiful. The chirp of the birds in the pine-woods reached her ear, but for the first time she listened without pleasure. All was sad and desolate within her heart, and the joyous splendor of that summer sunrise was to her feelings like "vinegar upon nitre."

Suddenly, the sound of a gay voice caroling reached her ear. It was such an unusual sound that she looked out, altogether startled from her dreamy lethargy of sorrow. What was her surprise to behold, emerging from the woods, a young girl on horseback. From the distance at which she sat she could not very easily discern her features, but she saw her sit on her horse like a practised rider. Her long hair hung in braids over her shoulders, tied with streamers of bright ribbon. In one hand she held a white sunbonnet, swinging it carelessly by the strings as she shouted, rather than sang, some wild mountain chorus, or talked at intervals to her horse. Edith could plainly hear her, as her words came borne on the air:

"Come, Timon, my boy," she said, patting her horse on the neck, "hurry up, or old Nan Crow will give you and me fits. Too bad, ain't it, you and I have to go and live in that dismal old barn of a house? But orders must be obeyed, you know, Timon. Dreary me! as that queer old maid used to say: 'wonders never will cease, I believe!' Who in the world would ever think of taking a bride to that horrid old hole? And so De Lisle is really going to be married! Weel, I never! Father says she isn't dying about him, either—which I don't wonder at, I'm sure, for I can't bear him. I'd like to see her, and know what my future mistress looks like. Come, gee up, Timon, my son; I'm anxious to catch a glimpse of old Nan Crow's beautiful face, and hear her musical, screeching voice. Who knows but we'll soon—see my lady herself, and I'm dying to have a peep at her, so get along, my boy, Elva's in a hurry."

And, urging her horse into a quick canter, the girl rode off, singing at the top of her voice.

"Who can she be?" thought Edith—"Elva, Elva! the name is familiar. Yes, now I remember, De Lisle spoke of sending me a girl of that name. 'Elva Snowe, I think he called her. She spoke of coming here, too, so it must be the same. I hope it is; she will at least prove a more pleasant companion than that cross old woman."

For nearly an hour Edith sat expecting to see her enter, but in vain. At length, just as she was about to despair of seeing her, the outer bolts were withdrawn, the door was unceremoniously opened, and the young girl stood before her.

Edith fixed her eyes on the other and scrutinized her from head to foot. The newcomer was small, below middle height, round and plump in figure, and looking to the best advantage in the crimson silk basque which she wore. A short black skirt, which conveniently displayed a pretty little foot and ankle, completed her costume—which, though looking rather odd to the eyes of Edith, had the merit of being very becoming. Her face was decidedly pretty, though browned a little by exposure to sun and wind. A low, smooth forehead, blooming cheeks and lips, merry, gray eyes, a piquant little nose that turned up with saucy independence, and little, white teeth, made up the tout ensemble of the little lady.

"Good morning," she said, pleasantly, evidently rather favorably impressed with the outward appearance of Edith. "I have brought you your breakfast."

"So I perceive," said Edith. "I was afraid I was about to be favored with another visit from that deaf old lady who has hitherto attended me."

"Yes, old Nan Crow," said the girl, laughing. "Isn't she a horrid old case? I have the greatest fun with her sometimes. Did you ever hear such a voice? Like a penny whistle, for all the world." Then changing her tone to a sharp screech, painful to listen to, she began: "I'm Miss Crow, housekeeper and superintendent for Master Ralph. Yes, um! I laid awake all last night with the rheumatiz in the small of my back!"

"That is she exactly," said Edith, with something like a smile passing over her pale face, "though it's quite abominable of you to take her off in that manner."

"She always scolds me from the time I come here until I leave," said the other, "and, indeed, I rather deserve it sometimes, and it does one good to get a blowing up once in a while. My! if she can't scold, it's a wonder—it's really a comfort to hear her, for every word comes from the bottom of her heart. The only pity is, that I'm not here very often to listen to her."

"Do you not live here?" inquired Edith.

"Live here! Bless you, no! I wouldn't live in this lonesome old place for any amount of money, at least any amount I'd be likely to get for doing so. No, indeed, I live in the village, eight or nine miles from here, and splendid times we have, I can tell you—at least we had until this detestable war commenced, and all the young men were provoking enough to go off and be killed. Heigho! Isn't everything still here? One can't hear a thing but the swaying pines and the birds. It's a splendid day, too. I'd love to have a good gallop over the hills this morning."

"Pray, don't let me keep you here," said Edith. "I wouldn't deprive you of the pleasure on any account. I will not need any attendance during the day, Miss Snowe—isn't that your name?"

"Yes, Elvena Snowe, but everybody calls me Elva, for short; you needn't mind calling me Miss, I ain't used to it, and Elva sounds better."

"Then, Elva, do not let me deprive you of that coveted ride. Go, by all means."

"You're very good, but I guess I won't mind it to-day. I'll stay with you if you have no objection. De Lisle will be here by-and-by, and until he comes I will remain."

"How long are you to remain here?" inquired Edith.

"Dear knows," said Elva, suppressing a yawn, "not long, I hope, for I'd blue-mold, rust, or something else equally dreadful, if I had to stay in this dull old tomb. Why, everything's as still here as if we were in our graves."

"It is still," said Edith; "what is the cause? Does no one live here but Miss Crow?"

"Oh, dear, yes!" said Elva, "but this is a wing of the building off by itself. It's a sort of double house, with two front doors, and connected together by a long hall. In the other end, De Lisle and some of his men stay when they are here, and you have this part all to yourself. Old Nan is their only servant, except sometimes when De Lisle brings some of his friends here, big-bugs, you know, English officers; then I have to come here and help her."

"Then this place is not hidden in the woods?" said Edith, "and is visited by others besides De Lisle and his men?"

"La! yes. Generals, and colonels, and captains, not to speak of lieutenants and aide-de-camps, come here in droves, sometimes, and spend whole nights in a carouse. They generally stay in the other wing of the building; this part hasn't been much used for years."

"And so forms a safer prison for me," sighed Edith.

"Why, yes, I suppose so," said Elva. "But I guess you won't be here long. I heard De Lisle telling my father that after he was married he intended getting your money and sending you home."

"Your father!" echoed Edith, "who is he?"

"Oh, he's only De Lisle's lieutenant, Paul Snowe's his name; but he has a good deal of influence over the men, and over De Lisle himself for that matter. Only for him, you may be sure, I wouldn't be here; for I hate De Lisle as I do sin, and wouldn't care a straw for his orders. But I'm a little afraid of father, and have to mind what he says, you know; though I'd much rather follow my own sweet will, and stay in the village, and have fun, than come here and wait on De Lisle and those dashing officers he brings here."

"And your mother, where is she?" asked Edith.

"Dead," said Elva, sadly, "she died when I was a child. I have only a faint recollection of her, as a pale, stately woman, who used to come to my bedside and kiss me every night. So you see I grew up the best way I could, without any one to look after me or make me a good girl; and so I've got to be a wild, sunburnt, good-for-nothing romp. Oh, dear, if mother had lived I'd have been a different creature from what I am. She loved me, I know; but father never seems to care for me, but rather to dislike me than otherwise. I'm like the miller of the Dee: 'I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me;' so I don't mind a pin what I do or say, since there's no one to be grieved by it. It makes me feel sad and lonely, too, sometimes," and she sighed involuntarily.

"Oh, Elva, I feel that I can love you, if you will let me!" said Edith, gently, taking her hand.

"Thank you, dear Miss Percival," said Elva, looking up with glistening eyes; "I love you already. But hark, there's a step on the stairs. That's De Lisle, I know, for he always takes half the staircase at a bound. Good-by now, I'll be back after a while," and Elva quitted the room as De Lisle entered.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR INTERRUPTION.

"Know, then, that I have supported my pretensions to your hand in the way that best suited my character."

—Ivanhoe.

"GOOD morning, fairest Edith," was De Lisle's salutation, as he entered. "You are looking very pale, "I fear you did not sleep well last night."

"Not very well," said Edith, coldly; "a captive seldom sleeps very soundly during the first nights in prison."

"You have no one to blame for being in prison but yourself, Edith. Had you been less obstinate and self-willed you might now have been at home with your father."

"Sir, these reproaches sit not well upon your lips," said Edith, bitterly. "I am neither obstinate nor self-willed, as you well know, but I could not consent to marry one whom I no longer loved."

"No longer loved," repeated De Lisle, fixing his eyes upon her; "then you did love me once?"

"I may have done so," replied Edith, her face suddenly crimsoning, "but you forfeited my good opinion; and where I cannot esteem, I cannot love."

"And how, I pray you, fair saint, did I forfeit your esteem?" said De Lisle, with a sneer.

"By your base, unmanly conduct, sir, unworthy a man or a soldier," replied Edith, her gentle spirit roused to anger by his taunting words. "I had heard of the merciless cruelty of you and your men, the relentless fury with which you destroyed houses and villages, and shed the blood of unoffending fellow creatures, whose only crime was in defending their homes. And could I, could any woman think of you otherwise than with fear and loathing after such acts, more fitted for savages than for civilized men?"

"You seem particularly well informed about what I have done," said De Lisle, sarcastically. "Pray, fair lady, how much of this raw-head-and-bloody-bone story have you heard from Master Fred Stanley?"

"Mr. De Lisle," said Edith, her fair face flushing, "I must beg of you to cease referring to him. If you do not, I must decline holding any conversation with you."

"Sooner than incur such a penalty, pretty one, I would do anything," said De Lisle; "but before this time to-morrow you will be my wife—and after that I trust you will know your duty to your husband too well to refuse talking to him."

"Sir, I will not; I will never be your wife," said Edith, passionately.

"Oh, it is all very well for you to say so, Miss Percival, but how are you to help yourself? You are here, my prisoner, completely in my power, surrounded by my people, the clergyman who is to marry us will be most discreetly silent as to everything he will see or hear—is prepared for hysterics, tears, and rebellion, and will pay no attention to them. How, then, beautiful Edith, are you to help yourself?"

"God liveth!" said Edith, rising, and speaking in a tone of intense solemnity, "and I appeal to Him from you—unworthy the name of man."

"The days of miracles are past, Edith," said De Lisle, with his customary mocking sneer. "He will hardly send an angel down to prevent the marriage of a silly girl. The time of miracles has long since passed, fair one."

"But not a Divine interposition," said Edith; "my confidence in Him can never be shaken. I will trust in Him, and you may do your worst. Heaven will never permit the happiness of my life to be blighted by you!"

"Bah! bah! bah! are you silly enough to believe such cant, Edith?" said De Lisle, scornfully. "I thought you had more sense. But time will tell; ere four and twenty hours you will be my wife in spite of yourself, and then where will be your boasted confidence in Heaven?"

"I have faith to believe that time will never come," said Edith. "But should it, my confidence in Heaven will be as strong as ever."

"You believe that time will never come," said De Lisle, "and may I ask what do you expect will happen to prevent it?"

"Oh, fifty things might happen," replied the voice of Elva, who entered abruptly, in time to hear his remark, and took it upon herself to answer: "The Yankees might come and set fire to the house, and carry her off—or the minister might forget to come—or she might be very sick—or you might be accidentally shot, which would set everything right at once. For my part, if I was Miss Percival I'd live in hopes."

"Would you, indeed?" said De Lisle, angrily. "Well, I prefer living in certainty. "And pray, Miss Snowe, what brought you here?"

"My feet, of course," answered Elva.

"Don't be impertinent, minion; answer my question."

"I did answer it, Mister De Lisle, sir," replied Elva.

"What did you come here for?" exclaimed De Lisle, in a rage; "what do you want?"

"Oh! I want nothing," replied Elva, with provoking indifference; "only father's arrived, and sent me here with a message for you."

"What is it, what did he say?" demanded De Lisle, hurriedly.

"He didn't say much; the message consisted of just five words: 'Tell him it's all right,' that's all. It's short and sweet, you see, like a weaver's kiss."

The look of satisfaction that followed her words rather surprised Elva, who, after watching him a moment, turned to Edith, saying in a very audible whisper:

"Something dreadful has happened to somebody, as sure as shooting! Nothing else ever puts him in such good humor. See how absurdly happy he looks."

"Clear out!" said De Lisle, who was too well accustomed to the pert Elva to get into a passion at her impertinent words. "Tell Paul I'll see him by and by; and don't you come here again until you're sent for."

"Nice way, that, to speak to a young lady," said Elva. "I guess Miss Percival would rather have me than you with her, after all." And, turning a pirouette on one toe, the elf disappeared.

"Well, Edith," said De Lisle, turning to her, "our marriage will not have to be postponed till to-morrow, as I feared it would. I sent Paul to see if the clergyman could come to-day, and the answer is favorable. Therefore, you will prepare to become my bride this afternoon."

The blood rushed for a moment hotly to Edith's face, and then retreated to her heart, leaving her faint and sick. She had hitherto looked upon it as some fearful dream—now it arose before her, a terrible reality. She strove to speak, but the words died away on her pale lips. Involuntarily, she laid her hand on her heart to still its loud throbbings.

"Of course," went on De Lisle, calmly, "this news must be equally pleasant to both of us. You, no doubt, feel anxious to return home—which I regret you cannot do until after our marriage, for reasons before given; and I know confinement in this lonely place must necessarily be very irksome to you. I trust, therefore, Miss Percival, you will see the wisdom of submitting yourself, and make no resistance to the ceremony taking place—a resistance which you must know would be idle and useless, since there is no one here who has either the will or the power to prevent it."

"Ralph De Lisle, you cannot, you will not be so base!" said Edith, vehemently, rising. "I conjure you, by all you hold sacred in heaven and dear on earth, to desist! Why should you render miserable for life a defenseless girl who never injured you? It is not because you really love me that you wish me to be your wife, but for my father's money; and that you shall have, I solemnly promise you. You will—you will release me! I cannot believe you are so deliberately, basely wicked!"

She stood before him with clasped hands, flushed cheeks, and glistening eyes—her long, golden hair floating like a glory around her. Never had she looked so beautiful; and, gazing upon her, De Lisle grew more determined than ever in his resolution.

"Nay, Edith, you wrong me," he said. "Your money, I confess, is an inducement; but were you a beggar, my affection for you is so strong I would still make you my wife! I love you better than you are willing to give me credit for."

"You do not!" she exclaimed, impetuously. "When did man wish to render miserable the woman he loved? You know I dislike you—detest you—and with you can never be happy!"

"You will learn to overcome this dislike in time, fair Edith," he said, coolly. "At present it is quite natural you should feel indignant, and fancy you dislike me; but, I assure you, it will wear away. Then, too, your silly penchant for a person who shall be nameless, renders you less reconciled to this union than you would otherwise be. Time, however, works wonders; and I have no doubt you will be in quite a different state of mind in a few months. I shall not trouble you again to-day until the hour appointed for our marriage; but Elva will attend you in the meantime. Au revoir," and, rising, De Lisle quitted the apartment.

Edith sat like one stunned by some sudden blow. Her arms dropped powerless in her lap; her eyes were wide open, with a look of fixed, stony despair. Every trace of color had faded from her face, as she sat like one suddenly turned to stone. From the doom before her she felt there could be no escape. De Lisle was all-powerful and she was utterly helpless. One by one the faces and forms of loved ones passed before her: father, mother, brother, sister, and—dearer than all—Fred. Where were they all now? Was there no one in all the world to help her? Sun, and moon, and stars seemed fading from her sky, and the future loomed before her so dark and full of horror that she drew back appalled. Only a few brief hours, and she would be the wife of De Lisle—a fate far worse than death! Hope, there was none; and involuntarily she covered her face with her hands, and groaned in the depth of her anguish.

She heard the door open and some one enter; but she did not look up. Her hands were gently removed from her face; and, raising her head, she met the pitying eyes of Elva.

"Dear Miss Percival," she said, gently, "don't grieve so! Bad as Ralph De Lisle is, I don't think he'll force you to marry him against your will."

"He will—he will!" exclaimed Edith,

wringing her hands. "Oh, Elva! What shall I do?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Elva, "I wish I could help you; but it is quite impossible. Really, though, I never thought he'd be so mean. It's dreadful to think about; but I don't see how it can be helped."

The look of sublime perplexity on Elva's face bordered closely on the ridiculous, and at any other time would have provoked a smile from Edith. But she only sat with her hands pressed to her throbbing head, striving in vain to think, with her brain in such a whirl.

"When is this precious wedding to take place?" inquired Elva, after a pause.

"This afternoon," answered Edith, hurriedly. "Your father went after a clergyman."

"Why, you don't mean to say that little, dried-up anatomy, with a face like a withered pippin and a nose like a boiled beet, who came home with father, is a clergyman?" said Elva, opening her eyes in amazement.

"I really do not know," said Edith, faintly.

"Well, if it is, I'll give up!" said Elva, drawing a long breath. "Why, I saw him drinking gin and water with father, and singing, 'Old King Cole was a merry old soul,' as jolly as the worst cutthroat in De Lisle's gang."

"Elva Snowe!" called the shrill voice of Miss Crow, at this moment.

"Oh, there's Miss Crow!" said Elva, jumping up. "I must go and see what the blessed old seraph wants, or she'll drive me wild with her screeches."

And Elva vanished.

The hours dragged slowly on, and Edith waited in vain for her reappearance. The afternoon waned; but still, to her surprise, she came not. Rousing herself from the lethargy into which she was falling, she arose and paced up and down the room, striving to collect her thoughts. She turned to the window, and gazed out. The sun was setting in cloudless splendor. The heavens were flushed with gold, and azure, and purple, and crimson; and amid this radiant setting the sun shone like a jewel of fire. A fading sunbeam, as it passed, lingered lovingly for a moment amid her golden hair. With clasped hands and parted lips, Edith stood entranced, forgetting everything save the glorious beauty of that gorgeous sunset.

The sudden opening of the door startled her. She looked up, and her heart sank like lead in her bosom as she beheld De Lisle.

"Come," he said, taking her hand—"the hour has arrived, and the clergyman is waiting."

She grew faint and dizzy at his words, and was forced to grasp his arm for support.

"Let me assist you," he said, kindly, as he placed his arm around her waist and drew her with him.

She drew back involuntarily—her lips parted, but no sound came forth as she lifted her eyes in a voiceless appeal to his face.

"Nonsense, Edith!" he said, almost angrily—"you must come. Have I not told you resistance is useless?"

He drew her forcibly with him as he spoke. Quitting the room, they crossed a long hall, descended a flight of winding stairs, which led them to another hall, similar to that above. Opening one of the many doors that flanked it on either side, De Lisle led his almost fainting companion into a room, which she saw indistinctly, as in a dream, filled with people.

The clergyman, book in hand, stood at the upper end of the room. At a little distance stood the man, Paul—the same individual seen by Fred in the music-room of Percival Hall. Near him stood Elva, pity and indignation struggling for the mastery on her pretty face. Old Nan Crow, grinning and chuckling, and evidently in a sublime state of beatitude, was perched on a chair in the corner. Various other individuals—members of De Lisle's Tory band—were scattered round the room, watching poor Edith with mingled curiosity and admiration.

Supporting the slight form of his companion, De Lisle led her to where stood the clergyman.

"Go on, sir," said De Lisle, briefly, "we are ready."

He opened his book, and already had the ceremony commenced, when a sudden noise broke upon their ears, and startled all to their feet in consternation.

Shouts, cries, yells and the report of firearms, mingled together in wild confusion, resounded without. Ere any one could move, a man, wounded and bleeding, rushed in and fell lifeless at the feet of De Lisle.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRISONERS.

"A careless set they were, in whose bold hands
Swords were like toys."

For a few moments all stood spellbound, gazing in silence and consternation in one another's face, while the noise and uproar without seemed still increasing. Oaths shouted, the clash of swords, and the report of firearms united in fierce discord. So completely unexpected was the surprise that all stood looking at one another and at their fallen com-

rade in speechless wonder. But De Lisle's presence of mind never forsook him—the true state of the case seemed to flash upon him instantly—and, turning to Elva, he said, hurriedly:

"Conduct Miss Percival to her chamber, and, whatever happens, see that she does not escape." Then, turning to the others, he called: "There is danger without! Follow me!"

And as he spoke, he disappeared through the open door.

The men rushed pell-mell after him, and in a few moments the room was deserted, save by the clergyman, Edith, Elva, and Miss Crow. Edith stood listening breathlessly, while her heart once more began to throb with hope. De Lisle's enemies were her friends, and she might yet be free once more.

Nan Crow was the first to speak. Turning to Elva, who stood listening eagerly to the sound of the conflict without, she said:

"What are you a-standing there for, like a fool? Go 'long with you, and take her off to her room, as Mister Ralph told you."

"Yes. Come, Miss Percival," said Elva; "there may be danger in remaining here. Let me assist you—you seem week and faint."

She passed her arm round her waist, and led her from the room. Wrought to the highest pitch of suspense and anxiety, Edith tottered and was obliged to lean on her companion for support.

"Oh, Miss Percival, who do you suppose they can be?" inquired Elva, when they reached the apartment of Edith.

"My friends, I feel certain," said Edith, pressing her hands on her heart to still its tumultuous throbbings—"who, having missed me, by some means discovered that I am here. Great heaven, Elva, listen to those terrible sounds without!" said Edith, with a shudder.

"The conflict seems to grow more desperate each moment," said Elva, listening breathlessly.

The noise and confused din of the fight were indeed momentarily growing more violent. Almost wild with excitement, Edith paced up and down the room, striving to catch some sound by which she could judge which party was the victor. But she listened in vain—nothing met her ear but a discordant din, in which the cries of all were mingled in indiscriminate confusion.

For upward of an hour the strife continued, and then suddenly all grew still. They could hear, for a time, the sound of many feet passing and repassing through the different rooms and passages; but gradually this died away, and was followed by a silence so deep and ominous that the young girls looked on each other, pale with undefined fear.

"Oh, this suspense!—this suspense! It is killing me!" said Edith, sinking into a chair and covering her face with her hand.

"De Lisle must have conquered!" exclaimed Elva, "or your friends would be here before now."

"The will of Heaven be done," came from the pale lips of Edith—while the hope that until this moment had animated her heart died out in deepest despair.

"What can this sudden silence mean?" said Elva. "It is not their customary way of conducting themselves after a victory. I cannot stay here—I must go and see."

"Let me go with you!" pleaded Edith.

"No, no—you must stay here!" exclaimed Elva, hurriedly. "To go with me would be dangerous. I will return immediately. Do try and restrain your impatience for a short time, and you will hear all."

She left the room as she spoke, and Edith was alone in the profound silence and rapidly deepening gloom. It was a calm, starless night. Without, in the gray dusk, the tall, swaying pine trees looked like dim, dark specters. The shrill cry of the whip-poor-will and katydid came at intervals to her ears; and once the hoarse scream of a raven broke the stillness, sending a thrill of superstitious terror to the heart of Edith. Each moment seemed an age, until the return of Elva. Unable to sit still, in her burning impatience, Edith paced rapidly up and down the room—her excitement lending to her feeble frame an unnatural strength. There was a wild, burning light in her eye, and a hot, feverish flush on her face that betokened the tumult within. Her head ached and throbbed with an intensity of pain; but she hardly noticed it in the fierce agony of impatience she endured.

She counted the hours as they passed on; midnight came, but Elva was absent still. She seemed almost like a maniac in her maddening impatience, as she trod wildly up and down the long room. "She will not come to-night!" was ringing in her ears, as she clenched her small hands together so fiercely that the nails sank into the quivering palms until they bled.

Her quick ear at last caught the sound of a rapid, excited footstep without. She sprang forward, breathing heavily in her impatience, when the door opened, and Elva, bearing a lamp in her hand, entered.

Placing the lamp on the table, Elva drew a long breath, and, with a muttered "Oh, dear!" flung herself into a seat. Her long hair was streaming wildly over her shoulders; her face was very pale; her dress disordered and stained with blood.

"Elva! Elva! Speak! What has happened?" inquired Edith, in a voice husky with deep emotion.

"Oh, just what I told you! De Lisle and his villainous-looking set have conquered!" exclaimed Elva, impatiently.

For a time nothing could be heard but the labored breathing of Edith. She strove to ask another question; but though her lips moved, they could not utter the words. Elva sat with her lips compressed and her eyes fixed moodily on the floor. Looking up, at length, and seeing the expression on Edith's face, she said, in reply to it:

"Yes, they were your friends—I heard De Lisle say so. There were only seven of them altogether; but they fought desperately, and, I believe, killed half of De Lisle's band. They were conquered, however, and killed—with the exception of those who appeared superior to the rest, and whom De Lisle said he would reserve for a more terrible fate. One comfort is," added Elva, flinging back her hair almost fiercely, "Old Nick will pay him with interest for all this some of these days!"

Edith did not exclaim nor cry. Her face was only a shade whiter, her eyes dilated with a look of unspeakable horror, her voice, when she spoke, sounded unnaturally deep and hoarse.

"Did you hear what were the names of those three?" she asked.

Elva looked up in alarm at the strange sound of her voice.

"One, the youngest of the three, I heard called Gus, I think; and another looked so much like you I think he must be your brother. But the third—he was splendid; he looked like a prince—so tall, and dark, and handsome. He was wounded, too, but he walked in looking as proud and scornful on De Lisle as though he were a king and De Lisle his slave. I never saw such a look of intense, fiendish hate and triumph on any face as De Lisle's wore when he looked on him. They are now confined in separate rooms at the other side of the house, though I fancy they will soon leave it for a narrower and darker prison. Oh, Miss Percival, I have had to look on such fearful sights to-night! I have a little knowledge of surgery, and I was obliged to bind up those fearful wounds. Ugh!" and Elva shuddered convulsively.

There was no reply from Edith, who stood like one suddenly turned to stone. Her brother and cousin were in the power of the merciless De Lisle—and that other! there was but one man in the world to whom Elva's description could apply—one dearer than life—whom she never expected to see again. And he—would De Lisle let him live to see the sun again?

"De Lisle is going away somewhere to-morrow," said Elva, looking up, after a pause. "He received a letter a few hours ago which will take him off—thank goodness! I suppose he will see you before he leaves, and tell you when he will return."

"Elva!" exclaimed Edith, suddenly, "if De Lisle leaves here, why can we not make our escape during his absence? You can aid us, can you not?"

"I scarcely know," said Elva, thoughtfully. "I might aid you, it is true; but as father is commander here until De Lisle's return, he will have to be answerable for it. Beside, you will all be very carefully guarded; and I fear, were any attempt to escape discovered, it would be worse for us. De Lisle might marry you immediately, in spite of all obstacles; and as for the others—well, I wouldn't give much for their chance of life now, but any such attempt would be their death-warrant!"

"Then escape is impossible, and there is no hope but in the grave!" said Edith, sadly.

"Oh, do not say it is impossible!" said Elva. "Indeed, the more I think of it, the less difficult it seems. Let's see"—and she leaned her head thoughtfully on her hand—"De Lisle will probably be absent a week or so. Before the end of that time I may find some opportunity for throwing the men off their guard, and setting you free. I have no doubt I could easily effect your escape; but it may be more difficult to liberate your friends. However, if I cannot, you can inform your friends where they are, and let them come here and free them by force of arms."

"But, Elva, the moment De Lisle would discover my escape, do you not think he would wreak his vengeance on those remaining in his power? You, too, dear Elva—what would he do to you?"

"Oh! as for me, I ain't afraid of him—only I don't like to get father into trouble; but as there is no alternative, he'll have to run the risk, and I'll set you free if I can. But your friends—yes, it would be very dangerous for them to be here after your flight is discovered. I must think. I have no doubt I can hit on some plan to get the whole of you out of his power. And if I do, won't it be as good as a play to see De Lisle! Oh, won't he rage, though, and blow us all sky high to think he has been outwitted by a girl! La! I think I see him."

And Elva, changing in a moment from seriousness to gayety, laughed outright at the vision that rose before her mind's eye.

"Do you think you see him, minion?" suddenly exclaimed a low, fierce voice, that made both spring to their feet in terror. The door was pushed open, and

De Lisle, pale with rage, stood before them.

"Oh, well, you heard us, did you? I never had a high opinion of you, and I'm not surprised to find you playing the eavesdropper!" exclaimed Elva, defiantly.

"By all the fiends in flames, girl, you shall repent this!"

"Shall I, indeed! That for you, Mr. De Lisle!" said the audacious Elva, snapping her fingers in his very face.

"Leave the room, you impudent"—

"Impertinent, outrageous, abandoned young woman—ching a ring, a ring, chaw!" sang the elf, making a whirl.

"You shall never remain another night in this house"—

"Delighted to hear it," again interrupted Elva, with a profound courtesy.

"Silence! Who, then, will help this fair lady or her lover to escape?" said De Lisle, with a look of triumphant malice gleaming in his eyes.

"Heaven helps those who help themselves!" said Elva.

"Well, I fancy Heaven will not trouble itself about this affair. And now, miss, the sooner you leave this room and house the better," said De Lisle.

"Surely, Mr. De Lisle, you will allow Elva to remain with me?" said Edith, speaking now for the first time.

"No, madam, I will not," said De Lisle, sternly, "after listening to that ingenious plot. I shall take care that every means of escape is cut off. Leave her with you forsooth! Do you think me a fool?"

"Think!" repeated Elva; "not she, indeed; she knows you to be one."

"Will you leave the room, or shall I turn you out?" exclaimed De Lisle, angrily.

"Don't trouble yourself," said Elva, coolly. "I'll go myself and be thankful to get out of this dismal old tomb. Good-by, Miss Percival; keep up your spirits. Old Nick'll twist De Lisle's neck for this by and by—a blessing for which I intend to pray night and morning. Don't get into a rage, my dear sir, as I see you are going to; it spoils your beauty, of which you have none to spare." And, casting upon him a look of withering contempt, Elva left the room and ran downstairs.

For a few moments after her departure De Lisle walked up and down, as if to cool the storm of passion into which the taunting words of Elva had thrown him. Edith sat pale and motionless in her seat. Pausing at last before her, he said, in a tone of bitter sarcasm:

"Well, Miss Percival, I see you can plot better than I ever gave you credit for. How unfortunate I chanced to spoil your pretty little scheme! After all, you see, Providence seems to favor me more than you. Do you not suppose it was 'divine interposition' that so providentially sent me here in time to discover your plans?"

With the determination of not answering him, Edith sat listening in silence.

"You do not answer," he went on, in the same ironical tone, after waiting a moment.

"It is just as well; silence gives assent I know you will regret to hear that business of importance calls me away for a few days, thereby delaying our marriage; but at the end of that time I will have the happiness of claiming you as my bride. I scarcely regret the hasty interruption we met with a few hours ago, as it will permit me to invite a few friends of yours to assist at the ceremony. Mr. Frederic Stanley, who will shortly follow his friends to a better world, will be present to witness our nuptials, fairest Edith, and take his last farewell of my bride. He will, doubtless, feel happy during his last moments, when he knows the lady he professes to love is the happy wife of another."

He paused, and glanced with a look of malignant triumph at Edith, who sat quivering like an aspen in her chair.

"Yes, fairest Edith," he went on, "my hour of triumph has come. Ere five suns rise and set, he for whom you would willingly die will hang a discolored corpse between heaven and earth, and you will be my wife. No power on earth can save you; if an angel from heaven were to descend and plead for you both, I would refuse."

She lifted her head, and De Lisle saw a face so full of horror, with such a look of utter anguish and despair, that he started back appalled. She did not see him; her eyes were gazing steadily forward, fixed, glazed, and rigid. She only saw the vision his words had conjured up—herself the wife of the living demon beside her, and he whom she loved dying in agony the death of a malefactor. So rigid, so unnatural, so full of speechless horror was her look, that, alarmed for the effect of his words, De Lisle sprang to her side, exclaiming:

"Edith! Edith! Good heavens! do not look so wildly. Edith! look up—speak to me!"

The hand he held was cold as ice. Her head dropped on her breast, her eyes closed, and she fainted entirely away.

Terrified beyond measure, De Lisle raised her in his arms, and laid the apparently lifeless form on the bed, and sprang downstairs at a bound in search of Elva. He found that young lady in a violent altercation with Nan Crow—who, in spite of all Elva's vehement threats and protestations, positively refused to let her out until morning.

"Go upstairs! go!—Miss Percival has fainted!" exclaimed De Lisle, hurriedly,

catching Elva's arm in his haste to push her along.

Wrenching her arm violently from his grasp, and casting upon him a glance of concentrated contempt and hatred, Elva passed him, and flew rather than ran upstairs to Edith's room.

She still lay lifeless upon the bed. Elva opened her dress and began chafing her hands and temples. Long she labored in vain—no sign of life was there, and something almost akin to a feeling of pleasure entered the heart of Elva as the conviction that Edith had escaped the power of De Lisle forced itself upon her. But life was not extinct—a few hard-drawn, laboring breaths—a sudden fluttering at her heart, and the long lashes were lifted, and the cloudless blue eyes sought the bright face of Elva.

"My dear, dear Miss Percival, I thought you would never look on any one again!" exclaimed Elva, as she soothingly pushed back the bright hair off Edith's face.

"You here, Elva?" exclaimed Edith, vacantly. I thought—I thought—where is he?" she said, with a sudden look of terror.

"Downstairs, the horrid wretch!" exclaimed Elva, passionately.

"I thought he had sent you away?" said Edith.

"So he did, and I am going, too; but when you fainted he sent me here to attend to you. I am sorry to leave you, Miss Percival, but you see I must go."

"Oh, it don't matter!" said Edith, wearily; "it is all the same to me."

Elva looked hurt—so much so that Edith noticed it, and, laying her hand on hers, she said:

"Dear Elva, don't be offended. I did not mean to hurt your feelings, but for the few days I have to remain, it matters little who attends me."

"Are you going away?" asked Elva, in surprise.

"Yes, I hope so."

"With De Lisle?"

"No."

"Why, are you not going to marry him?"

"No."

"No!" repeated Elva, beginning to think her mind wandered; "how will you avoid it?"

"Elva, I shall die!"

"You will not commit suicide?" said Elva, shrinking back in horror.

"There will be no necessity, Elva; I shall die."

"Dear lady, I trust not. Heaven is merciful, and there may be happy days in store for you yet. Before morning dawns, night is ever darkest. Do not give way to despair, but trust in Heaven."

"You can go now," said the voice of De Lisle, as he stood in the doorway; "your horse awaits you at the door."

He paused, and drew back to allow her to pass.

Pressing a kiss on Edith's brow, she arose, and, whispering in her ear the one word, "Hope!" she left the room.

As she passed De Lisle, she cast upon him a look of such dark, withering scorn that he absolutely quailed before her. Passing down the stairs and through the numerous empty rooms, she left the house, sprang upon the back of Timon, and in a few moments was lost to sight among the trees.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOE SMITH.

"Dost deem that aught can hide in beggar rags
A heart so bold as mine?
And dream'st thou aught of common danger now
Can scare me from my purpose?"
—Barry Cornwall.

To explain how the friends of Edith discovered her prison, it is necessary to retrace our steps a little.

For an hour or two after her departure with De Lisle, Major Percival walked thoughtfully up and down the broad piazza, debating within himself whether it were better to wait or compel Edith to fulfill her engagement. The words of Fred Stanley had thrown a new light on the subject, and he felt convinced that her affection for him was the cause of her refusal. To marry or not to marry, therefore, was the question; and, in a state of unusual indecision, the major debated the case pro and con.

While thus engaged Nell came running up the stairs and stood beside him:

"Papa, where's Edith?"

"Out riding with De Lisle."

"With De Lisle?" And Nell's eyes opened to their widest extent with amazement.

"Eh? What's that?" said the major, turning round sharply.

"Nothing, sir," said Nell, demurely, "but I really thought Ralph De Lisle was the last person Edith would go anywhere with."

"And why not, Miss Impertinence? Whom should she go with, if not with her future husband?"

"Why, papa, I thought Edith refused to fulfill her engagement?"

"We'll make her fulfill it!" was the short, sharp and decisive reply.

"Hem-m-m! perhaps so!" said Nell, with a scarcely perceptible smile, "but if I had been she, I know I'd not have gone with De Lisle to-night."

"You wouldn't?" And a storm began to gather in the major's eyes. "Why, may I ask?"

"Oh, I don't know; I wouldn't satisfy him so far; besides, he might try to run away with me, or something. I wouldn't trust him."

The words were spoken thoughtlessly; but the major gave a sudden start, and stood silent. Nell left him, and tripped downstairs to join Gus in the garden, leaving him to his own reflections.

An hour passed away; Nell and Gus left the garden and piazza for the cool, pleasant parlor; but the major still remained watching for the arrival of Edith and De Lisle. Another hour passed on, and still they came not. The major began to feel anxious and angry at the prolonged absence. His anxiety began to contribute itself to the other members of the family, as another hour wore away without them. A thousand conjectures were formed as to the cause of this unaccountable absence, but none seemed satisfactory. As midnight approached, uneasiness changed into real alarm; and the major and Gus, unable to endure the suspense longer, mounted their horses and rode off in the direction the absentees had taken.

A sleepless night was passed in Percival Hall. Early in the morning both returned from their fruitless search, weary and dispirited. No clew to their whereabouts could be discovered; and all gazed into one another's faces, pale with terror.

Half an hour after their return, a servant entered bearing a note which, he said, had been given him by a man, who immediately departed. The major glanced at the superscription, and recognized the bold, free hand of De Lisle. Tearing it open, he read,

"My Dear Sir:—As, for wise reasons, doubtless, you decline bestowing on me the hand of your fair daughter, I am under the painful necessity of making her my wife, without troubling you to give her away. For your own sake, I feel convinced you will not make a public affair of this—as I judge you have too much pride to allow your daughter's good name to become a byword for the town. Rest assured she shall be treated with all the respect due to the daughter of so distinguished a gentleman as Major Percival; and when once my wife, shall be restored to her home on one condition. It is, that you will give me her fortune as a sort of ransom which, as you are wealthy, no doubt you will willingly do. If you refuse, why, then it will be all the worse for your pretty, but rather stubborn daughter. The retreat to which I have taken her is secure, and you cannot discover it; therefore, you had better make up your mind to comply with my terms at once. If you do, your daughter shall be immediately restored to you; if not—

"I have the honor, my dear sir, to remain,

"Yours sincerely,

"Ralph De Lisle."

"The scoundrel! the treacherous, deceitful villain!" thundered the major, springing to his feet, white with passion.

"What is it?" demanded Gus and Nell, while Mrs. Percival's eyes asked the same question, though her lips were silent.

"Read that!" exclaimed the major, as he flung the missive he had crumpled in his hand fiercely from him. "Read that! For I cannot tell you."

Nell took it up, and read it slowly from beginning to end.

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Percival, "what shall we do?"

"Do?" shouted the major, "I'll send a bullet through his heart if ever my eyes light on him again. The black-hearted villain! Is this his return for all I have done for him? My daughter! My daughter in the power of such a villain!"

"My dear sir, what is the matter?" exclaimed a well-known voice; and, looking up, they beheld Nugent, dusty and travel-worn, standing before them.

In a few words Nell related all that had transpired, for the rest were too much excited to do so, and ended by placing De Lisle's letter in his hand. The brow of Nugent grew dark, and his eyes flashed fiercely; but, subduing all other signs of anger, he turned to his father, and said:

"Well, sir, on what plan have you decided?"

"Plan! I can think of nothing but of pursuing that scoundrel to the ends of the earth. Mount! mount! and after them!"

"Stay!" cried a voice, that made them all start, it was so stern and commanding. "Are you mad to start on such a wild goose chase? Wait; follow my directions, and all will be well."

They looked up, and beheld, to their amazement, the Hermit of the Cliffs, who stood before them like some prophet of old, in his flowing robes, majestic bearing, and snowy hair.

"You here!" exclaimed Nugent, in surprise.

"And wherefore not, my son?"

"I thought you were in the city. You were there a short time ago!" said Nugent.

"Whithersoever my duty leads me, there am I," answered the hermit, in his calm, grave voice. "The wolf hath stolen a lamb from the flock, and the rest shall be left in the desert while we search for the one that is lost. Listen to me, and go not forth rashly."

"This is no time for fooling!" exclaimed the major, impatiently. "Stand aside, old man, and let us begone!"

"Nay, there is one come who will show you the way," said the hermit. "Why should you wander in the dark when there is light at hand?"

"Do you know where my daughter is?"

demanded Major Percival, fixing his eyes sternly upon him.

"One is at hand who does!" repeated the hermit, in the same quiet tone. "My hand may not point out the way, but trust in him who will follow me. His eyes have been opened, and to him it is given to rescue the maiden of the house of Percival."

"Pshaw! Why do we stay listening to such nonsense?" demanded the major, impetuously. "What can this hoary old man know of Edith? Let us away; why should we waste time lingering here?"

He turned to go; but the hand of the hermit was laid on his shoulder.

"Thou shalt remain, Major Percival!" he said, in the same firm, calm tone of command. "It is given me to know that if you now set out, you will prove unsuccessful. Remain; he who cometh after me is at hand, and when he arrives, with thy son and this youth, let him search for the lost daughter of thy house; but do you remain here and watch over those who are left."

He bowed slowly and with grave dignity, and, folding his garment around him, quitted the house.

All stood looking in the face of each other, in amazement and uncertainty. Surprise that he should know already what had occurred, and wonder at the probable meaning of his words, were mingled with an uncertainty whether to follow his advice or not. The major and Newton thought of the strange power he exercised over Sir William Stanley; and, in spite of their impatience, were half inclined to follow his advice. Ere they could fully determine what course to pursue, however, Fred Stanley, his fine face flushed, and his garments disordered, stood before them.

"Stanley! by all that's wonderful!" exclaimed Nugent, in unbounded astonishment.

The major's brow grew dark as night, but the young man, in his excitement, scarcely seemed to notice him.

"What has happened? Where is Edith?" was his first demand.

"Young man, will you be good enough to tell us what sent you here?" said the major, sternly, stepping forward.

"Certainly, sir!" said Fred, with a stiff bow, "this singular note." And he drew forth a letter, and handed it to the major, who opened it and read:

"Ride, ride for your life to Percival Hall. She whom you love is in the power of your rival. He has carried her off by force. Take the road to the north; near the village of R. are the pine woods, where an old mansion of De Lisle's is situated. There you will find Edith Percival. E. S.,

"Hermit of the Cliffs."

"Let us start instantly!" exclaimed the major. "Every moment is precious!"

"You had better follow the directions of the hermit, and remain here," said Nugent. "We three, with one or two friends, will be enough. De Lisle's men are in all probability far enough from their leader, who feels too secure in his retreat to dread a visit from us. Beside, I have a message for you from your friend, Colonel Greyson, which admits of no delay, and will absolutely prevent you from going with us."

The major seemed still uncertain; but the others joined Nugent in urging him to obey the hermit, and remain behind.

Having, at length, reluctantly consented, Fred, Gus and young Percival, with one or two friends, started in the direction pointed out by the hermit.

Having reached the place indicated, they secreted themselves in the woods, while Nugent, who was familiar with the place, went to reconnoitre.

He soon returned with the ominous intelligence that there was a force six times their number in the old house, and that it would ruin their cause altogether to attempt at present to contend against such odds. Nothing remained, therefore, but to lie in wait, and seize the first favorable opportunity. None, however, presented itself; and the afternoon of the following day, accidentally overhearing a conversation between two of De Lisle's men, by which they learned the marriage was to take place that very day, they determined at all risks to make the attempt, the result of which is already known to the reader.

* * * * * * *

Half an hour after his interview with Edith, De Lisle sat in his own room, eating a hasty breakfast ere he departed on his journey. His meditations were at length abruptly interrupted by the entrance of Nan Crowe, who, in her usual screeching tones, announced that a boy without wished to see him.

"What does he want?" said De Lisle.

"Want?" repeated Mrs. Crow. "Yes, he wants to see you."

"What is his business?" demanded De Lisle, raising his voice.

"None of my business!" exclaimed Mrs. Crow, in rising wrath; "allers the way every one treats me arter a-trottin' me off my legs, with the rhumatiz in the small of my back, a-bringing of pesky young galls to 'tend on, what ain't no business here, a fighten and sitten up killing of one another, with the rhumatiz in the small of my back"—

"Go to the deuce, you old fool!" angrily interrupted De Lisle. "Be off with you and bring him here, whoever he is!"

Muttering to herself, Nan Crow quitted the room, and presently reappeared with a youth of some sixteen years—a rough, uncouth-looking lad.

He was small for his age, and dressed in a suit of coarse gray homespun,

which looked, to use a common but expressive phrase, as though they had been thrown on by a pitchfork. His face was bronzed and darkened by exposure to the sun, his eyes were bright and intelligent, and shone and glittered like glass beads through the coarse masses of uncombed sandy hair. His walk was peculiar, as he shuffled along in a pair of huge cowhide boots, dragging his legs after him as though they belonged to somebody else.

Such was the lad who now stood, hat in hand, before De Lisle, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other.

"Who are you?" demanded De Lisle, gazing rather contemptuously at the new-comer.

"Joe Smith, sir," answered the boy, with a strong nasal twang of "Deown East."

"What do you want?"

"Wall, I kinder kalkerlated on gettin' work."

"Work? what kind of work?" said De Lisle.

"Wall, I ain't particular; 'most anything comes handy to me."

"What have you been accustomed to?"

"Little of everything, boss. I gen'ly work on the farm to hum."

"Why did you leave hum, as you call it?"

"Wall, me and mother and Glory Ann thought as how I'd better come up to Boston and 'list; but arter lookin' round a spell, I didn't like it, and kincluded 'twasn't no sich fun to be shot as 'twas cracked up to be."

"What induced you to come here?"

"Why, I'd hearn tell o' you some, and thought maybe you wouldn't mind hirin' a new hand to cook vittils, and bring water, and chop wood, and sich. You see, bos I'm rather a smart chap, 'specially arter a lickin'; and didn't see no reason why I'd waste my talents a-raising pumpkins all my life; so when I makes my fortin here, I intends goin' home, and gettin' spliced onto Glory Ann Lazybones, a gal what's a regular buster, and no mistake."

"You are an original," said De Lisle, rather amused, "but I am surprised that you do not wish to join the rebels, like so many others of your class."

"Wall, boss, I allers had high ideers since I was 'bout so old, when I used to ride roun' every day on mother's old cheese-horse for exercise. These here rebels ain't no 'count, and bein' the weaker party, I intends pitchin' into 'em like a thousand o' bricks. Mother allers sez—sez she: 'Joe,' sez she, 'you stick to the strongest party, my son; it's allers best'; so, in course, as I'm a dootiful son, I obeys the old 'oman. 'Sides, if I turn Britisher, and help to lick our boys, there's no tellin' but what they'll want to make a lord or an earl o' me one o' these long-come-shorts. Lord Joe Smith! Jee-whittica! that sounds sort o' grand, don't it?"

"I see—number one's your lookout!" said De Lisle. "Well, since your ambition soars so high, it would be a pity to deprive Glory Ann of the chance to become Lady Smith; so I don't mind taking you into my service."

"Thankee, boss; you're a brick!" interrupted Mr. Smith, patronizingly.

"Don't be so familiar, sir," said De Lisle, sharply. "Learn a little more respect when addressing your betters. For the present, your duty will consist in assisting my housekeeper in her household affairs, and in looking after and attending to the wants of two or three prisoners confined here. One of my men will direct you what to do. And now, to begin your new duties, go and saddle my horse and bring him round to the door."

"All right, siree!" replied Joe, clapping his hat on his head, and giving it a vigorous thump down over his eyes, as he hastened out to obey the order, leaving De Lisle to finish his breakfast.

"There is yet one more duty to perform," muttered De Lisle, rising; "one so agreeable that it amply compensates for all the humiliation I have been, through him, forced to endure. Master Fred Stanley, I go to pay you a morning visit, and see how you estimate my kind hospitality, in keeping you here my guest."

The sinister smile he wore made his face almost repulsive as he arose and left the room.

Passing through a long hall, he descended a flight of narrow, winding stairs, and stood in another long hall, flanked on each side by doors. A sentry stood pacing to and fro before them. He paused, and touched his hat respectfully on seeing De Lisle.

"Where is Stanley confined?" he inquired.

"Here, sir," answered the man, opening one of the doors to allow him to enter.

De Lisle passed in, and found himself in a low, gloomy room, with a damp, unwholesome odor. Seated on a low stool, the only article of furniture it contained, was Fred Stanley, his forehead leaning on his hand, his eyes fixed on the floor, his brow knit, as though in deep, troubled thought. As the creaking of the heavy door fell on his ear, he looked up quickly and sprang to his feet as he saw his mortal foe before him.

For a moment they stood silently facing each other—those two rivals. De Lisle's face wore a look of triumph, mingled with most intense and deadly hatred. A bitter, sneering smile was on his lips, and a look of gratified malice in his eyes. Fred, stern, and cold, and haughty, stood opposite him, his arms folded across his breast, returning his gaze with such a look of lofty scorn,

that, in spite of himself, De Lisle quailed before him.

"Well, Frederic Stanley, my hour of triumph has come," said De Lisle, with a look of malignant triumph.

"Villain! do your worst! I defy you!" was the bold answer.

"That most assuredly I shall do," returned De Lisle. "Before the sun's rise and set you shall die the ignominious death of the halter."

"Do your worst, Ralph De Lisle; I fear you not!" was the rejoinder.

"When you crossed my path, and won the affections of her whom I loved, I swore a deadly oath of vengeance. Fortune has favored me, the time has come, and your hours are numbered. She whom you love is in my power, and the same hour which will see you swinging a discolored corpse between heaven and earth will see her a bride in my arms. You both began a dangerous game, Fred Stanley, when you thwarted my wishes, as you will find when the halter is round your neck, and as she will discover when, after making her my mine, I will whisper in her ear the fate of him whom she loves better than life."

"Fiend! Devil in human form! Do your worst, and may the heaviest curse of Heaven fall upon you!" exclaimed Fred, growing livid with passion.

"Ha! I thought you would feel that!" said De Lisle, with a grim smile. "You will have ample time to meditate on these and many other consoling truths between this and the day of doom. It will also, doubtless, be a pleasure to you to know that Edith will be a prisoner under the same roof with you until my return, which may be to-morrow, or, at the furthest, three days hence. And now it occurs to me that my revenge will be greater to allow you to be present at our bridal. I will thus have a double triumph over you both."

"A fiend could not be more diabolical!" exclaimed Fred, paling involuntarily at his words.

"Have I not well learned the art of torturing?" went on De Lisle, with a fiendish smile. "Death itself would be nothing—that would be a poor triumph. I know you well enough to be aware that you do not fear death; but the torture I shall inflict before death shall last even after the soul has left the body. I will leave you now to repose and solitude. You will have ample time," he added, with a sneer, "to meditate on your latter end, and make your peace with Heaven during my absence. Should I return to-morrow, before another sun sets you shall swing as high as Haman. Au revoir, until I meet you again on Abraham's bosom."

And turning on his heel, he strode from the room.

"To-morrow?" repeated Fred, gazing after his retreating figure, "who knows what to-morrow may bring forth?"

CHAPTER XVII.

JOE VISITS HIS PRISONERS.

"Trust in God!
Thou forlorn one, cease thy moan;
All thy pain and all thy sorrow
Are to God, the Highest, known;
He leaves thee now, but helps to-morrow.
Trust in God!"

THE bright sunshine of the morning following that eventful night shone into Edith's room; but it was all unheeded by her. She lay on her face on the bed, not sleeping, but in a deep, heavy torpor, her white arms extended above her head, so still and motionless that but for the quick, rapid breathing, one might imagine her dead.

Not of herself was she thinking, but of those for whom she would have given her life—of one whom she would gladly have died to save. Fred! Fred! all through that miserable night his name had been on her lips—his image alone in her heart. Never again would she meet those dear, dark eyes—already, perhaps, closed forever; that brave, impulsive heart, whose every throb had been for her, might now be cold and still in death.

The bolt was withdrawn, the door opened, some one entered, but she did not look up. She was conscious that some one was bending over her, but still she did not move until she heard a strange voice muttering, in a sort of soliloquy:

"Crikey! she beats the seven sleepers, she does! I'm blamed if she ain't as sound as a top. Wall, I s'pose I better leave the vittals here, and arter her snooze she'll fall to."

With a start, Edith rose on her elbow and gazed wildly around. Her amazement at beholding the uncouth figure and face of honest Joe Smith may better be imagined than described. So completely was she bewildered that she continued to stare at him between surprise and terror, scarcely knowing whether to cry out for help or not. Joe, however, bore her scrutiny with wonderful composure, and returned her stare with compound interest.

"Good mornin', marm. Fine day this. How's your folks? I hope the old woman and all the folks to hum is well!" said Joe, in a tone of condescending politeness.

"What?" said Edith, rather bewildered by the rapidity with which this speech was delivered.

"Never mind, 'tain't worth sayin' over again," said Joe. "I hope I didn't disturb any pleasant dreams o' your'n. You

was sleepin' away like all creation when I came in!"

"Who sent you here?" inquired Edith, whose terror had not quite vanished.

"Wall, the cap'n did, marm," replied Joe; I 'xpect I'm to be waitin'-maid till he comes back. I hain't no objections to it, though—'cause, maybe, I'll be able to l'arn Glory Ann somethin' in her line arter I go back to hum. Here's your breakfas', marm, what that jolly old case down in the kitchen sent me with. Seems to me the cap'n's got a taste for keepin' people in the lockup, judgin' by all I've 'tended to this mornin'. Let's see—two and one's three, and one's four—four I've visited this mornin', countin' you."

An exclamation of delight broke involuntarily from the lips of Edith. Three beside her! Then Fred was living still.

"Hey? What is it? Did you stick a pin in you?" inquired Joe, mistaking the cause of her emotion.

"Who were the three you visited this morning?" inquired Edith, with breathless interest.

"Wall, let's see," said Joe, closing one eye and laying his forefinger meditatively on the point of his nose, "the first, I think, somebody called Goose, or somethin' about the size o' that."

"Gus," amended Edith, eagerly.

"Yaas, Gus, or Goose, or some sort o' a fowl. I found him lyin' on the floor, takin' a snooze, I s'pose, somethin' like I found you. He got up when I came in, and fell to the vittals as if he'd been livin' on pavin'-stones for a week, an' 'tween every mouthful he took to askin' me a string o' questions as long as a lawyer's conscience. He wanted to know all the particulars 'bout you, and 'fore he'd give me time to answer one of 'em he blowed the cap'n and the whole blamed consarn sky-high. 'Twa'n't no use to try to reason matters with him, 'cause when I took to arguin', 'fore I got to thirdly, he told me to go and be hanged. You see I couldn't stand that—I wasn't used to it, mother never 'lowed no profane swearin' to hum so I just told him to be hanged himself, if he liked, but as for me, I was like the Highlandman, in no hurry."

"What Highlandman?" inquired Edith, absently.

"Why, some old Scotch big-bug, long ago, had a servant that did somethin', I forgot what, and he was goin' to hang him for it. But, you see, the servant had been a favorite of his, so his master told him he'd grant him the favor of choosing whichever tree in his orchard he'd like to be hung on. The servant was tickled to death to hear it, an' went out to choose the tree with his master. At last he stopped before a gooseberry bush, and said he'd be hung onto that.

"'Go to grass!' sez his master; 'tnat ain't big enough to hang a six-footer like you on!'

"'Oh, well,' sez the servant, 'I'll wait till it grows big. I'm in no hurry!'"

"But the others—the others?" exclaimed Edith, who had listened impatiently to this digression.

"Oh, ya-as—just so. Well, the next was the very picter o' you—s'pect he must be some relation. He was sittin' down onto a bench, an' asked me a few questions—not many, though; 'bout a dozen or so—if I'd seen you, and where was the boss, and so on. It was sort o' comfortable to talk to him sides the other two, who didn't seem to have a single grain o' senses in their knowledge-boxes."

"And the third?" demanded Edith, hurriedly.

"Him! O Jerusalem! I've seen a wild-cat—I've seen a bear with a sore head—I've seen a gander when somebody carried off the goslin's before him—I've seen mother in a passion, and a-flarin' around at the governor—but I never, never, never saw such a savage, wild-lookin' stunner as the t'other one. Cracky! when I went in thar, he was a-tearin' up and down as though he was boun' to have a walk somehow, if the floor held out—lookin' so sort o' savage-lookin' an' fierce that I like to spilt his breakfas' atop of him. It's lucky I didn't; for if he'd got his dander riz any wuss the Lor' a massy only knows whar Joe Smith'd be now. I'm blamed if I ever seen any one in sich a tearin' rage as that oove was in."

"It must have been Fred," thought Edith. "Was he wounded?—how did he look?" she asked, aloud.

"Wall, marm, I don't know as I kin tell," said Joe, thoughtfully. "He set me into sich a flusterification that it was 'most a danger to look at him. He had a black coat and trousis, and hair on, and was as tall as—as—I don't know who (that's a nice size for a man). He was sort o' darkish-lookin', with a black murstuasher onto his upper lip. Some people might call him good-lookin'; but Glory Ann allers sez fair hair's the nicest." And Joe gave his tow locks a complacent shake.

"Would you bring a message from me to them?" inquired Edith, eagerly.

"Wall, now, I don't know," said Joe, rather reluctantly; "'twould be sorter agin orders, you know. Sorry to refuse you, marm, but I can't help it."

"Tell him, at least, that I will die sooner than marry De Lisle. You will befriend me by doing so; and you can do no one any possible injury," said Edith, pleadingly.

"Tell who, marm—which of 'em?"

"The one you spoke of last."

"Oh! the fierce-lookin' one. Yes'm, I don't mind tellin' him. But I guess he

won't care. I don't believe he'd go to the weddin' if he was asked."

"You will tell him, at least?—you will not forget it?" said Edith, anxiously.

"Oh, no fear; I'll tell him, if he does blow me up. 'Tany rate, I guess weddin's is the last thing he'll think about, 'cause the boss is boun' to string him up like a dried mackerel soon as ever he comes back."

A convulsive shudder was Edith's only answer.

"Wall, now, marm, I wouldn't take on so if I was you," said Joe, gazing sympathetically toward Edith. "Arter all, I shouldn't wonder if things should turn out all right in the end. P'raps you've hearn tell o' people entertainin' angels in disguise?"

Edith lifted her head, and looked at him with so much surprise that Joe laughed and said:

"Keep up heart—there's nothing like it. I shouldn't be s'prised if me and Glory Ann danced at your weddin' yet. There's never no use in frettin'. Hope on, hope ever!"

"Who are you?" asked Edith, with an undefined feeling that she had heard the voice before.

"Lor! I'm only Joe Smith, from Bungtown. Old Jake Smith's my governor, an' me an' Glory Ann Lazybones is goin' to hitch teams one of these times, when they make a lord or somethin' of me—that's all. 'Tain't wuth makin' a book of."

"I think you resemble some one I've seen before," said Edith, with a puzzled look; "but whom, I cannot tell. Well, you may leave me now; I wish to be alone. You will not forget to deliver my message?"

"All right, marm; Joe Smith's got a stunnin' memory. Good morning. I s'pect that blessed old angel down in the kitchen'll give me fits for stayin' here so long. Don't forget to keep up your spirits. I don't believe we'll have a weddin' or a hangin' so soon as the boss thinks."

With this sage concluding remark, worthy Joe shuffled out of the room, leaving Edith to ruminate on the probable meaning of his words.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PLOTTING.

"Nightly tears have dimmed the lustre
Of thy sweet eyes, once so bright;
And, as when dark willows cluster,
Weeping, o'er marble rocks,
O'er thy forehead white,
Droop thy waving locks—
Yet thou art beautiful, poor girl,
As angels in distress—
Yea, comforting thy soul, dear girl
With thy loveliness."

—Tupper.

THE day's toil was over. Nan Crow, after screeching, and grumbling, and scolding to her heart's content, had thrown her apron over her head, and fallen asleep in her easy-chair in the long kitchen. The men were loitering idly about—some lying on the cool grass, where the shadows fell long and dark, rejoicing in the cool evening breeze after the scorching heat of the day; some sat at the table playing cards, swearing and vociferating at an appalling rate; others lounged in groups round the room, with bottles and glasses before them, relating their several adventures for the general benefit of all.

Mr. Joe Smith, who found his duties of maid-of-all-work rather fatiguing, would gladly have left the revelers to themselves; but they, having no one to wait on them, were determined he should not escape so easily.

Unceasing calls for Mrs. Smith, as they named him, resounded continually from one end of the room to the other, until, at last, in a fit of desperation, he told them to go to grass and wait on themselves. A shout of laughter and a unanimous cry of: "Come back! come back!" reached him; but, unheeding their shouts, Joe resolutely made his escape and set off for a ramble by himself.

Sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, Joe leaned his head on his hand and fell into a fit of profound musing. For upward of an hour he remained thus, with brows knit, eyes fixed on the ground and lips compressed like one in deep meditation. Suddenly a new light seemed to dawn on him and he sprang to his feet with the triumphant exclamation:

"I have it!"

"Have what?" said a merry voice beside him; and, turning abruptly round, worthy Joe beheld our little friend Elva.

"Wall, now, I don't know as it's any business o' yourn," said Joe, surveying Elva coolly from head to foot.

"You're mighty polite," said Elva.

"Wall, yaas, raythor; Glory Ann allers said so," said Joe, modestly.

"Who's Glory Ann?"

"A young lady up to hum; I'm goin' to be married to her some day."

"Nice girl, I expect?"

"Nice! That word doesn't begin to tell about Glory Ann Lazybones. I tell you she's a reg'lar screamer and no mistake."

"Shouldn't wonder!" said Elva. "Is she as good-looking as I am?"

"Wall, now, I don't know. Some folks might say you was better-lookin'; but I don't. You ain't so showy, you know. Glory Ann's got nice red hair; and red-haired girls is allers smart and spunky."

"They are, eh? Now, if I'd known that before I'd have dyed, and not gone whimpering through the world afraid to

call my soul my own. Perhaps it's not too late yet, eh? What do you think?"

"Oh, you don't need it. You've got impidence enough. You'll do."

"Well, really, that's cool. What's your name?"

"What's yours?"

"Elvena Snowe—not so pretty as Glory Ann Lazybones, is it?"

"Not quite; hers is a Scripter name, you know. Yours is pooty, though, and sounds sort o' cool this hot weather."

"Now what's yours."

"Wall, it might be Beelzebub, or Nebuchadnezzar, or any other Bible name; but 'tain't. I reckon I won't tell you; I'd rather not have it made public."

"Why?"

"Oh, well, Joe Smith ain't a common name, so I guess I'll keep it a secret. 'Sides, ther's no tellin' but you may fall in love with me; and I'm anxious to avoid sich a c'lamity."

"You're a case! Aren't you the boy De Lisle hired yesterday?"

"Wal, I mought be, and ag'in I moughtn't. Seems to me you're very inquisitive," said Joe, suspiciously.

"And it seems to me you're very cautious. What do you take me for?" said Elva, indignantly.

"Why, you might be a good many things—you might be Cornwallis or Washington in disguise, or you might be a spy from the enemy. There's never no tellin'."

"You're too smart to live long, Joe, dear. How do you suppose a little thing like me could be anybody but herself?"

"It does seem odd," said Joe, scratching his head, as if to extract some reason by the roots; "but then, you know, it's better to be sure than sorry. I like to be on my guard, so's I won't leave Glory Ann a widder."

"I honor you for your prudence, my son. And now, Joe, when I assure you I'm no desperate character—neither Cornwallis nor Washington in petticoats—maybe you'll answer me a few questions?"

"Yaas'm, if they're noways improper for me to listen to."

"You sweet innocent! do you think I'd ask such a saintly cherub as you anything improper? First, then, there's a young lady confined a prisoner in that old house over there?"

"Wall, now, raally couldn't say." And Joe looked innocently unconscious as he issued this little work of fiction.

"Oh, get out, and don't tell fibs!" exclaimed Elva indignantly. "There's three other prisoners there, too, isn't there?"

"There might be; I don't like to say for sartin, for fear o' tellin' a lie," replied Joe, shutting one eye, and fixing the other reflectively on a grasshopper at his feet. "I'll ask when I go back, and send you a letter to let you know."

"You abominable wretch! I know very well they're there," said Elva, losing all patience.

"Wall, and if you know very well, where the mischief's the use o' askin' me a string of impudent questions, 'and callin' me names?" exclaimed Joe, indignantly.

Elva couldn't resist laughing at Joe's look of offended dignity.

"Yes, you may larf," said Joe, with a look of intense disgust. "I s'pose it's all very funny, comin' and callin' a fellar names. It shows all the brought'n up you had!" And Joe gave the innocent grasshopper at his feet a vicious kick.

"There, now, Joe, don't get mad, like a good boy," said Elva, patting him soothingly on the back, "listen to me; I'm Miss Percival's friend, and wish to see her."

"Well, go and see her, then," said Joe, sulkily, "I ain't hinderin' you."

"But I can't," said Elva, "unless you help me."

"Me!" said Joe, opening wide his eyes, "how?"

"Why, you must find the key of the side door and let me in that way. I don't want anybody to see me. Now do, like a dear, good boy."

"You be grannied!" exclaimed Mr. Smith, losing all patience, "can't you tell a fellar who you want to see, and not be goin' on with your story hind end foremost."

"Why, I thought you knew," said Elva. "I mean the prisoner, Miss Percival."

"Oh! that's her name, is it?" How was I to know, when nobody never told me? So you want to see her, do you?"

"Yes, yes, yes! Do let me in, will you?"

"Why don't you go and ask some of the others?"

"Oh! they won't let me, they're hateful, but you're not. Ah, Joe, won't you?" And Elva looked pleadingly up in his face.

"Wall now, marm," said Joe, laying one finger reflectively on his nose. "I'd like ter oblige you if 'twas anyways possible, but if I'm found out the boss wouldn't make no bones o' stringing me up like a red herrin', and I tell you what, I hain't no ambition to be elevated in the world after that fashion."

"He won't find you out; how can he?" exclaimed Elva, impetuously; "he is away, the men are all lounging and drinking in the other wing of the building, old Nan Crow is asleep, and there is no one plotting mischief or making love but you and me. There! you needn't look surprised. I know more about that old house and its inmates than you think. So now, Joe, you dear, good-natured looking old soul, let me in to see Miss Percival and I'll dance at your wedding."

This last entreaty had a due effect upon Joe, who indulged in sundry low chuckles at the idea. Recovering his composure at last he seated himself deliberately on the log, and crossing one leg over the other, and fixing his eyes solemnly upon his cowhide boots, fell into a profound fit of musing. Elva stood watching him, swinging her light straw hat by the strings and tapping her little foot impatiently up and down.

"Well now, Joe, I hope you'll soon honor me with an answer," she said at last, quite out of patience. "I declare I never saw such a stick of a fellow as you are, a body can hardly get a word out of you."

"Eh?" said Joe, looking up; "were you speakin' to me, Miss Elva?"

"Was I speaking to you, Miss Elva?" repeated that young lady, mimicking his tone. "Yes, I was speaking to you, Miss Elva. Did you ever hear it was impolite not to answer a lady when she speaks to you?"

"Wal, if I don't talk much, I keeps up a mighty big thinking," said Joe, "and as to answerin' ladies, why, as I never met one yet I couldn't hev bin very imperlite to 'em."

"Why, you horrid, impudent fellow, what do you call me but a lady?"

"Oh, my eyes!" ejaculated Joe, with a look of infinite contempt. "You a lady? You hain't no more the look of one than I hev. Lady, indeed! You git out!"

"Well, we won't argue the question now," said Elva. "Perhaps we've hardly time at present to do the subject justice. And now, once for all, will you grant my request?"

"Why, I don't mind if I do, seein' it's you," replied Joe; "but first I'll go and see Miss Percival, and tell her you want to see her. By the time I git back it'll be dark, and you can git in without bein' seen, and everything will go off smoothly."

"That's a good boy!" said Elva, approvingly. "Maybe I won't write to Glory Ann one of these days and tell her what a nice fellow she's going to get. Hurry up now, and I'll wait here till you come back."

So saying, Elva seated herself on the fallen tree, and watched honest Joe as he shuffled slowly out of sight and disappeared among the trees.

An hour passed, and Joe had not made his appearance. A deep gloom was settling around, the dark pines swayed solemnly to and fro in the night breeze. There was no light save that of the radiant stars; no sound save that of the wind and the cry of the katydid. The silence was almost painful, as Elva sat wild with impatience. At length, as she was about to despair of his coming at all, a familiar voice at her ear startled her with the expressive phrase:

"Here we is!"

"O Joe! is it you? I thought you would never come. Well, can I see her?" she exclaimed, breathlessly.

"Yes'm! I've 'ranged everything beautifully. I'll go back to the house, and you'll steal round to the side door you was speaking of, and I'll let you in. That's the way!"

And each took a different path, both leading to the old house.

The side door spoken of had long been unused, and was almost hidden by vines and shrubs. Forcing her way through these, Elva waited until she heard the key turn in the rusty lock. Pushing open the door she entered a long, dark hall, where she beheld Joe standing, lamp in hand.

"Here, take this," said Joe, handing her the light. "I s'pose you know the way up to her room better'n I can show you. I'll be about here and wait, and let you out."

"You're a darling!" exclaimed Elva, as she almost flew up a long, winding staircase. "How I wish I was Glory Ann Lazybones to get such a prize as you." And with a merry laugh she vanished amid the gloom, while Joe gazed after her with a look of decided admiration.

Reaching the well-known chamber of the prisoner she tapped at the door. A low voice bade her enter, and withdrawing the bolts, she passed into the room.

Edith sat by the table, her head leaning on her hand, her bright, golden hair falling like a veil over her pale, sweet face. She looked up as Elva entered, and approached with extended hands.

Elva was shocked beyond measure by the change those few days had made. The face of Edith, always fair, seemed now perfectly transparent, the deep-blue eyes had grown dim and heavy with constant weeping. A long illness could hardly have changed her more than those miserable days and sleepless nights, albeit she was not used to "tears by night instead of slumber."

"My dear Elva, how glad I am to see you again!" said Edith, pressing the young girl's hands in her own.

"The pleasure is mutual, my dear Miss Percival. But how pale and thin you are looking! Have you been sick?"

"No, not exactly sick; but I have been ill in body and mind. O Elva! how could I be otherwise in this dreadful place?"

"Very true!" said Elva, sadly; "and your friends, are they still here, or has De Lisle"—

"No, no!" interrupted Edith, hurriedly, "not yet! But when he returns—O Elva! Elva! pray Heaven I may die before that dreadful time!"

"Not so, Miss Percival. You shall live and be happy, in spite of all the De Lisles that ever cheated the hangman!" exclaimed Elva. "We'll see if woman's wit is not more than a match for man's cunning. De Lisle will not return, father says, until the day after to-morrow; and when he does come back and find his bird has flown away from her cage during his absence, won't there be a scene? Whew! it will be as good as a play to see him!" And Elva clapped her hands in delight.

"Elva! what do you mean? I do not understand," said Edith, looking bewildered.

"Why, you shall make your escape to-morrow night—that's the talk! When everybody is sleeping I'll come here, fasten a rope ladder to your window—climb up—iron gratings old—easily taken off—you'll get down—make a moonlight flitting—and before morning dawns you'll be over the hills and far away!"

Edith caught her breath at the vision thus conjured up. But a moment's reflection banished the bright hopes Elva's words had recalled to her heart.

"My cousin, my brother, and—their friend, how can I go and leave them here in the power of De Lisle? O Elva! I cannot go!"

"Bother!" exclaimed Elva, impatiently. "What good can your staying here do them? Will it help them any? Do you think your marrying De Lisle (as you will most assuredly have to do, if you wait until he comes back)—if they really care for you, will it not render them far more miserable than anything they may have themselves to suffer? Whereas, if you escape you may yet rescue them; or, if you cannot, you can at least let the world know what a villain he is, and have the comfort of letting the world see him dance on nothing. Stay here, indeed! Nonsense, Miss Percival! I beg your pardon for saying so, but the idea is perfectly absurd."

Edith's feelings always caught their tone and impetus from whoever chanced to be with her. Now some of the daring spirit that glowed on the cheeks and flashed in the eyes of Elva animated her own heart as she raised her head, and said, firmly:

"Be it so, then, kindest, best of friends. I shall make the attempt; if I succeed I shall at least be spared the wretched doom of becoming the wife of one I detest; if I fail, my fate can be no worse than it is now."

"Fail!" echoed Elva, cheerily. "In my vocabulary there is no such word as fail. No, you will live and laugh at De Lisle yet."

"That's the chat!" exclaimed a voice that made them both start; and turning round in alarm, they beheld the shock head of Master Joe protruded through the half-open door.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ESCAPE.

"The lovely stranger stands confessed
A maid in all her charms."
—Goldsmith.

"THAT'S the chat!" again repeated the worthy youth, as, seeing he was discovered, he walked in and coolly took a seat.

"O Joe! my dear Joe! you will not betray us?" eclaimed Elva, while Edith sat in silent dismay.

"Don't know 'bout that!" replied Joe. "'Tain't fair to be cheatin' the boss in this fashion. La! how nicely I caught you that time!" and evidently highly delighted at the recollection, he leaned back and laughed until the tears stood in his eyes.

"O Joe! you won't tell, will you?" pleaded Elva. "How would you like now if Glory Ann was a prisoner and wanted to escape if somebody hindered her? Just think what a heartrending case that would be, and let us off."

"Wall, now, I don't know's I'd care. I'm gettin' sorter tired o' Glory Ann!" said Joe, coolly.

"Unfaithful youth!" exclaimed Elva, in a voice of horror. "Poor, deserted Glory Ann! But since that fails to move you, Miss Percival's father is very rich, and if you help her to escape your fortune is made."

"Go to grass!" indignantly exclaimed Mr. Smith "What d'ye s'pose I care 'bout his money? No'm; if you han't somethin' better to propose than that, I'll blab!"

"What can I offer?" said poor Elva, in despair. "Just mention something yourself, Joe, and if it's in my power, you shall have it."

"There's one thing," said Joe, meditatively.

"Name it—name it!" exclaimed Elva, impatiently.

"It's very easy, too, though I never thought of it afore," went on Joe, in the same slow, thoughtful tone.

"Name it!—name it!" exclaimed the impatient Elva.

"Yes. I don't care 'bout Glory Ann—there's no mistake in that. Red hair's common, and I guess I'll take to some other color," continued Joe, seriously, without lifting his eyes off the floor.

"Oh, you wretch! You provoking creature! You stupid old thing, you! Will you tell me what it is?" and Elva, losing all patience, shook him so soundly that poor Joe looked up quite astonished.

"Hey? What's the matter? Oh, you want to know what it is, do you? Wall, you see, I've got kinder tired o' Glory

Ann, as I sed, and I'd like a change; so I'll help the young lady to run off, if"—

Joe paused, and looked doubtfully at Elva.

"Well, if what?" reiterated that young lady.

"If you'll marry me!" exclaimed Joe, like a man of honor, coming to the point at once.

"Done!" exclaimed Elva; "there's my hand on it. Who'll say, after this, I haven't had a proposal?"

And Elva cast a glance toward Edith, that, in spite of herself, brought a smile to the face of the latter.

"You're a trump!" exultingly exclaimed Joe, "a regular stunner! I tell you what; I'll set free them three coves down in the lower regions, if you like. I will, gracious!"

With an exclamation of joy, Edith and Elva both sprang forward, and caught each a hand of Joe, who looked a little surprised, not to say alarmed, at this sudden attack.

"Joe, dear, you're a darling!" exclaimed Elva. "I'll marry you a dozen times over, if you like!"

"All right!" said Joe, "and now that the courtin' part o' the business is over, s'pose we change the subject. Let's see, to-morrer night, 'bout twelve, be ready, and if we don't fix 'em, it'll be a caution!"

And Joe arose to leave.

"But, Joe, won't you tell us what you intend to do?" said Elva; "just consider I'm your better half now, and have a right to know."

"Don't trouble yourself, marm. I'll tell you arterward," replied Joe; "and now I shouldn't be s'prised if 'twas time for you to go. To-morrer night, 'bout this time, come round to the side-door and I'll let you in so's to be ready to start with us."

Elva laughed, and with a cheerful good night turned to follow him, leaving Edith with a more hopeful look on her face than she had worn for many a day.

The following day Joe did not appear until nearly noon, when he informed Edith that he had told her friends of their plan and that they were "tickled to death 'bout it." To all her anxious inquiries as to what that plan was he only replied by telling her to "hold on and she'd see arter a spell."

With the approach of night came Elva who was silently admitted by Joe through the side-door, and conducted to Edith's apartment. There that worthy youth left them, after many charges not to be asleep when he called for them by and by.

Elva knew that three men remained each night in the corridor before the cells of the prisoners, and how Joe was to conduct them past these was a mystery she could not solve. Joe, however, turned a deaf ear to all her questions, and repeating his command to be ready at the appointed hour, left them to themselves.

Passing through the many halls and passages and staircases, Joe at length reached the opposite end of the house and entered a spacious sitting-room, where nearly a dozen men were seated around a long table in the middle of the floor, singing, shouting, telling stories, and vociferating in the most approved fashion. At the head of the table sat Paul Snowe, the father of Elva, in blissful ignorance of the plot his audacious little daughter was weaving to free his prisoners.

"Hi there! Mrs. Smith! Where the deuce have you been all evening?" called a flashy-looking individual, known as Dandy Dan; "I believe in my soul, the tow-headed scoundrel is forever making love to Lady Beauty above-stairs."

"Come here, Mrs. Smith, my dear," said another, "the jug's empty and Nan Crow's asleep. Be off to the kitchen and fill it, and here's your good health, ma'am."

With a smothered growl, which elicited a shout of laughter, Joe took the huge earthen jar which stood in the center of the table, and set off on the errand. Filling it from a large cask which stood in the kitchen, he drew from his pocket a bottle containing a colorless liquid, and emptied its contents into the Jamaica rum. A smile of triumph flitted over his face, which was, however, changed to one of sulky stupidity as he again stood before the revelers, panting under his load.

"Good boy, Joe!" said Dandy Dan, helping him to lift the jar on the table; "has your mother any more like you?"

"Yes, thar's lots on 'em to hum, but none so smart as me," said Joe, in a tone of artless simplicity.

"You're a genius, Joe. Pity they didn't make a lawyer of you!"

"No, sir, none o' our family ever fell so low as that yet," said Joe, in a tone of offended pride; "mother was to law once and I never wants to know no more 'bout it."

"And what sent the old lady to law?" inquired Paul Snowe.

"Wall, 'twas about our cow. Our cow and mother and two other cows was out, and she kicked the minister."

"Who did? Your mother?"

"No, the cow. He was goin' 'long, and she took to jawin' him 'bout something she didn't like in his sermons."

"The cow did?"

"No, mother. So he comes over to 'xplain, and he leaned agin her, and takes to smoothing down her back."

"Smoothing your mother's back?"

"No, the cow's. But she wasn't goin'

to take none o' his blarney, so she just turned up her nose and told him to go to pot."

"The cow told him so?"

"No, mother! But he took to arguin' and at last forgettin' he wasn't in the pulpit, he brought his fist down with an almighty thump on her back."

"On your mother's back."

"No, darn ye, on the cow's! So havin' a spirit of her own that wouldn't put up with sich insults, she lifts up her hind leg and gins him a kick."

"Your mother did?"

"No, blame you, the cow! By gracious, I won't stand to hear the old woman insulted this way!" exclaimed Joe, indignantly.

A roar of laughter followed, during which Joe stood looking savagely from one to the other, and at last turned away in evident disgust.

"I say, Joe, don't leave us, man," called Paul Snowe. "Tell us what happened to your mother and the other cow."

"Find out!" said Joe, shortly. "What's the use o' tellin' a story when you're too stupid to understand it? I wouldn't tell you another word if you was to bust!" And with this spirited announcement the young gentleman gave his pantaloons an indignant hitch, and repaired to the kitchen.

Another hour passed, and the uproar grew "fast and furious." Joe listened with a smile, and a muttered, "it will soon be over," and patiently "bided his time."

Gradually the noise died away. Now and then a heavy sound would be heard, as one of the drunken revelers fell prostrate on the floor, and a long-drawn snore betrayed his profoundly drunken sleep. Joe went in softly. Lying under the table, and in various directions through the room, was De Lisle's gallant band. Paul Snowe lay back in his seat, his head down on his breast, sleeping as profoundly as the rest.

Joe seized the jar, considerably lighter now, and repaired with it in the direction where the prisoners were confined. Leaning against the walls, half asleep, were the remaining three who had been left to guard them.

"Who comes?" cried one of the sentinels, opening his sleepy eyes.

"Only me, Ben—Joe Smith. The other chaps drunk theirselves asleep, and I brought the jug here, thinking you might like the rest."

"Thanky, Joe; may you never die till your time comes," said the man, as he, together with his companions, gathered round the jug.

"Don't see any reason why them coves upstairs should have all the fun to themselves," said the second, taking a long draught.

"That was my notion exactly!" said Joe.

"Prime that!" said the third, smacking his lips. "Joe, you deserve to be made an archbishop of."

Joe took the compliment with all humility and looked with delight at their eagerness to empty the jug. Very soon its effects became apparent, for the three worthy sentinels lay stretched at full length, as sound asleep as their companions upstairs.

Joe arose softly, and took the keys from the belt of one; then he opened the nearest door, and Fred Stanley stepped forth. Joe then noiselessly opened the other two doors, and Nugent Percival and Gus made their appearance.

Joe made a motion for them to be silent, and, lifting the lamp, beckoned them to follow. With noiseless step they obeyed, and in a few moments they stood in the cool night air, free once more."

"Wait here a minute," said Joe, when they arrived before the useful little side door, as he opened it and disappeared.

"That small youth is worth his weight in diamonds," remarked Gus, as he Joe disappeared.

"He reminds me strangely of some one I've seen before," said Percival; "but whom, I cannot recollect."

"Just fancy De Lisle's disappointment when he comes back, losing his prisoners and his bride! Eh, Stanley," said Gus.

"What?" said Fred, rousing with a start from a dream of Edith.

"Ah! I fancy I know where your thoughts were that time," said Gus, while Percival smiled slightly, but said nothing.

"Here we are," said Joe, reappearing, followed by Edith, wrapped in a large cloak, and leaning on the arm of Elva.

There was but little time for congratulations. As the whole party passed through the gate, Joe gave Elva a nudge in the ribs, saying, in a very audible whisper:

"S'posin' you and me goes and gets spliced right off! Where's the use losin' time?"

"Thank you; I guess I won't mind it just now!" said Elva, laughing and blushing, as she caught the dark eye of young Percival fixed upon her with a look of decided amusement.

"We part here, then," said Joe, extending his hand. "Good-by, Elva. Have you no message to send to Glory Ann?"

To the surprise of all, he had suddenly lost his peculiar nasal twang. Fred, who had been watching him earnestly, came forward, and, laying his hand on Joe's shoulder, said:

"Further disguise is unnecessary, I know you."

Joe laughed and colored slightly, as he lifted his cap and removed his wig, and in spite of the dye on his face, they beheld and recognized the merry face and black eyes of Nell Percival!

CHAPTER XX.

THE JOURNEY HOME.

"Oh, she is a shrewd one!—as keen as a briar!
Though her lip pouts with love, it can curl with disdain;
And her eye, now so soft, can shoot quivering fire.
Ah! she's a shrewd one!"

—J. W. H.

"NELL! by all that's glorious!" exclaimed Gus.

"Is it possible!" ejaculated Edith, almost transfixed with amazement.

"I thought I had heard that voice before," said Nugent, scarcely less astonished.

"Is she a girl or a boy?" said Elva, turning from one to the other, completely bewildered.

"A girl, my dear, a girl!" said Nell, gayly; "and I hope you won't forget you've promised to marry me. If you do, why then I'll call you out, and we'll have pistols before coffee, as sure as shooting."

"But Glory Ann?" said Elva.

"Ah, yes—poor thing! But we won't pursue the harrowing subject just now, having no time to lose," said Nell. Then, lowering her voice, she added, hurriedly: "Can you give me other garments? I don't wish—that is"—

"Oh, to be sure!" interrupted Elva; "we will help ourselves to horses from De Lisle's stables, and you can come home with me while the rest wait in the forest. We won't be long."

A few minutes saw them on their way—Nell and Elva far ahead of the rest.

"We had better wait for them here," said Percival, suddenly halting.

"Who would ever think Nell so clever!" said Gus, in a tone of delight.

"Seeing that cleverness don't generally run in our family," said Nugent, laughing.

"'Pon my honor, I'd never imagine it. She visited me daily, too, and I gave her a decided blowing up once or twice," said Gus.

"She told me of that," said Edith, smiling, "and seemed quite indignant about it."

"I say, Edith, who is that pretty little dear she has gone off with?" inquired Percival.

"Why, it's Elvena Snowe, the daughter of one of De Lisle's men, and for whose unfailing kindness I shall ever be grateful," replied Edith.

"I hope we shall not be kept here much longer," said Gus. "Had I not better ride forward and meet them?"

"Meet them?—meet Nell, you mean," said Percival, laughing.

"Here they come," said Fred, whose quick ear had caught the sound of horses' feet in the distance.

In a few moments more the young girls rode up, Nell arrayed in a neatly-fitting riding-habit of Elva's—the bright face flushed a little, now that the paint was off, as they could see even in the moonlight.

"I have coaxed Elva to come back and bid you all good-by," said Nell. "Would you believe it, she actually did not wish to come."

"You would not have treated us that way, dear Elva?" said Edith, kissing her fair brow. "How I wish you could come home with us altogether!"

"Yes, do, Elva; we'll have such glorious times; you and I, and—Glory Ann!" coaxed Nell.

"I cannot," said Elva, almost sadly; "but I hope to see you all once more. You had better hasten now—delay is dangerous."

The adieux were hastily spoken. Waving her hand in a last farewell, Elva turned and rode off down the forest path.

There was silence for a while, during which the party gained the highroad—Nell in advance, between Gus and her brother, and Fred and Edith following rapidly.

"And now, Nell, tell us about this strange affair of your masquerade," said Gus, at length.

"Well, it's nothing to make a fuss about," said Nell. "I suppose I needn't tell you that when you went off that day you didn't come back, as we expected. Papa was away, and mamma was making a great time about it. I tried to cheer her up, but 'twas all of no use; she insisted the whole four of you were comfortably located in Abraham's bosom."

"'Pon my honor, we came pretty near it," said Gus.

"Well, the day passed, and none of you came. Mamma was in a dreadful way, to be sure, and some of her friends came to visit and console her. I knew she wouldn't want me, with so many to look after her; so I asked and obtained leave of absence for a week or two, and as I was always fond of adventure, I determined, like a second Don Quixote, to go off in search of you."

"Bravo, Nell!" exclaimed Percival.

"I knew how to find the old house, and felt pretty sure Edith was there, at least, though I confess I had my doubts whether you three had not been

sent to 'kingdom come.' I determined to disguise myself, and, having colored my face, and procured that horrid tow wig, I dressed myself in a suit of clothes procured for the occasion. Before venturing into the power of De Lisle, I determined to see if any one would recognize me, and I actually chatted for an hour with mamma, about the farm 'to hum,' and 'Glory Ann Lazybones,' without being recognized. So, of course, I knew my disguise was perfect; and I came, saw, and conquered. That's all!"

"By Jove, Nell!" exclaimed Gus, delightedly, "you're a"—

"What?" said Nell.

"A regular stunner!" was the reply.

"Well, I consider that anything but a compliment," said Nell; "and, rest assured, Master Gus, I should never have taken the trouble of going there to save you—but as it was just the same to take you along with the rest, I thought I might as well do it. Being wonderfully amiable, I'm always willing to oblige people when it's no trouble to myself."

Conversing gayly thus, they rode along until the red hue of coming morn appeared in the east.

"Fred and Edith seem to have quite a nice time of it behind there," said Nell, looking back; "I expect they're saying a lot of pretty things to each other."

"Suppose we follow their example," said Gus.

"Perhaps I am de trop," observed Percival, smiling.

"Here they come!" said Nell; "wonder if they overheard us?"

At this moment Fred and Edith rode rapidly up. The keen dark eyes of Nell saw in a moment that her sister had been weeping, and that Fred looked unusually flushed and agitated.

Lifting his hat to Nell, he said, briefly:

"We part here, I believe. Allow me to bid you farewell."

"What! going to leave us?" exclaimed Gus and Percival—while Nell, completely astonished, silently retained his hand, and Edith bent her head still lower to hide her falling tears.

"Yes, I must be at N—— to-morrow," answered Fred.

"But I thought you were coming home with us," said Percival.

"I regret I cannot do so. My presence here is no longer required, and business obliges me to go to N——. Good-by, Miss Ellen," he added, with a smile, "give my best wishes to Glory Ann. Farewell, Percival. Gus, when shall I expect to see you?"

"Let's see, a week at the furthest," replied Gus.

"Very well! Until then au revoir! Adieu, Miss Percival."

Her lips moved, but her reply was not audible as she took in hers the hand extended. The next moment he was galloping rapidly off in the opposite direction.

"Now, that's what I call real mean of him," said Nell, pouting, "to go off and leave us that way. I don't care if he was twice as handsome as he is, I wouldn't have anything to do with such a fiery-headed fellow for any possible inducement."

"Very glad to hear it, my dear," said Gus.

"Well, then, you needn't be, my dear. For indeed I'd no more have you than him."

"Oh, come now, Nell, you don't mean it?"

"Oh, come now, Gus, I do mean it! And I'd thank you not to be so confident that I'm dying about you, for the future. If I choose to amuse myself flirting with you, for want of any one else, you're not to imagine I care one pin for you, I'd have you know."

"My dear Nell, if I thought you were serious, I'd take up the first broken ramrod I could find, and blow my brains out."

"My dear Gus, you can do for that as you please; only, as you happen, unfortunately, to have no brains, I don't see how you're going to blow them out. Seems to me, if I were you, I'd try to blow a few in, instead of blowing them out."

"Nell, be serious."

"Gus, I am serious, awfully serious, as you'll find out to your cost."

"I know you just do this to torment me, you little vixen. But do try and be good-natured for once. Nell, you know I must leave you in a day or two, 'and be off to the wars again.'"

"Dear knows, I'll be glad to be rid of you," said Nell, in all sincerity.

Gus looked hurt, so much so that Nell looked up and exclaimed:

"There, gracious me! you needn't look so sulky about it. Of course, I'll be glad when you go off, for all my other friends of the masculine persuasion were afraid to pay me the slightest attention, lest they should be wasting their 'sweetness on the desert air,' that is to say, on somebody else's property. And I'll tell you what you'll do, Gus," she added, as though struck by a sudden thought, "go off and try if you can't captivate Elva Snowe. She's a nice little thing, and almost as pretty as me."

"I'd rather have you, Nell."

"Oh! I dare say; but you see you can't have me, Gus. 'Tain't everybody in this vale of tears can get such a prize as I am (not to be egotistical). Well, dear me! (to change the subject) won't this be an adventure to talk of! Why, I don't believe one of your wonderful Lady Aramintas in the romances could have done it better."

"Nor half so well, my dear."

"I always had an immense respect for Joan of Arc," went on Nell, "but I'll begin to admire myself after I perform two or three more wonderful deeds of arms. How hot it is! Poor Edith droops like a flower wilted in the sun."

"I hope you're not going to take to poetry, Nell, if you do"—

"Don't be alarmed, Gus; I have too much respect for the feelings of my family to be guilty of such a thing; but poor Edith does look dreadfully used up."

"There is an inn not far from here," observed Gus; "I think we can procure a carriage of some description there that will convey you and Edith home. You must be tired too, Nell."

"Oh! not a bit. I'm never tired, but we must try to get one for Edith. Wait, I'll tell her."

Nell drew up, and waited until the others had reached her, then in a few words she communicated her wishes to her brother.

"Yes, that will be best," said Percival; "Edith does look worn out. How far is the inn from here, Gus?"

"Not more than a mile," replied Gus; "we will soon reach it."

A few minutes brought them to it, and after waiting for breakfast they resumed their journey, Edith and Nell comfortably seated in a light wagon, with Gus driving, while Nugent galloped on to announce the news at home.

There was a joyful meeting at Percival Hall that night. Nell was decidedly the lion of the evening, and bore her honors with edifying indifference. Major Percival, who had only returned a few hours before, was in raptures, and declared she was "every inch a Percival." Mrs. Percival gazed upon her with moistened eyes as she thought of the narrow escape of her children, and the numerous friends of the family were extravagant in their eulogisms of her conduct.

Edith lay on the sofa, utterly prostrated in body and mind, too wearied for the exertion of speaking; and with her eyes shut, she listened, while her thoughts were far away. There was one wanting to make that family circle complete—one whose name all avoided mentioning.

A few days restored Edith to her wonted health; again a soft bloom began to mantle her pale cheek, and her blue eyes grew bright and radiant once more. A happy circle gathered in the parlor of Percival Hall each evening—the past making it seem more happy by contrast.

But leaving the inmates of Percival Hall, we must follow the changing fortunes of Fred Stanley.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HERMIT'S PREDICTION.

"My heart is with my native land,
My song is for her glory;
Her warriors' wreath is in my hand,
My lips breathe out her story.
Her lofty hills and valleys green
Are smiling bright before me,
And like a rainbow-sign is seen
Her proud flag waving o'er me."

—T. H. H.

THE little village of Grassfield was in an unusual state of excitement. Groups of old men, boys, and women were scattered in every direction, talking over, with exultation, the latest news from the "seat of war." A splendid victory had been gained by the American troops, the news of which had just reached Grassfield; and now the matter was being talked over, in all its bearings, by the delighted villagers.

In the barroom of the "Battle and Bowl," the one solitary inn which the village contained, was assembled the collective wisdom of Grassfield. The hostess, a pretty little black-eyed woman, bustled in and out, attending to her guests, occasionally stopping to glance in the cradle where a tiny item of humanity lay, with wide-open eyes, making desperate exertions to swallow its own tiny fists.

The unusual sound of a horse galloping rapidly along the street caused the whole assembly to rush pell-mell to the door. The horseman drew up, and consigning the animal to the hostler, passed through the gaping crowd, and entered the barroom.

Pretty Mistress Rosie, the hostess, who was busily washing glasses behind the counter, no sooner beheld him than with an exclamation of joy, she dropped her towel, and running forward, seized him by both hands, exclaiming: "Why, Mr. Fred, how do you do! I'm delighted to see you! I am indeed! Where have you been this long time? Fighting with the rest, I suppose! Well, well, who'd have ever thought it? Sit down, sit down! Well, I declare, I am glad. Did you see my Josh lately? No, I s'pose you didn't, though, or he'd mentioned it. He's off, fighting like the rest; he is, indeed! I had a letter from him last night; and he says he's quite well, and expects to be home soon. Well, this is a surprise! Dear me; how glad I am to see you. But sit down, la, me! sit down, Mr. Fred. I declare, I've kept you standing all this time!"

And having by this time talked herself quite out of breath, the bustling little woman danced out a chair, and flirting her apron over it to blow off the dust, permitted Fred Stanley (for he it was) to sit down.

"And how are all my friends, Mrs.

Wilde," he said, with a smile; "for yourself, I need not ask, for I see you are looking as blooming and handsome as ever."

"Oh, to be sure," said the lively little woman; "what would hinder me? All your friends are well, too, and Betsy Higgins is married to the tailor—you remember her, don't you? the little milliner that used to be in love with you. There, you needn't be laughing now; if you had been in Betsy's place, I guess you wouldn't see anything in it to laugh at. But bless me! I forgot to show you the baby. He's named after you, too; for everybody says he's your born image."

Fred laughed as he glanced down at the little fat, red face, framed in an enormous cap frill. Mrs. Wilde—evidently delighted at the striking resemblance between the tall form and dark, handsome face of Fred, and the little blinking atom, his namesake—lifted up the baby and deposited him, with a jerk, into the arms of Fred.

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilde, folding her arms and nodding her head in a very satisfied manner, "if he ain't your very picter! It takes after you every way, too, for it's the quietest, blessedest, young one"—

Here a loud, shrill yell from the blessed young one himself interrupted his mamma's eulogium. Fred, who seemed rather afraid of it than otherwise, glanced apprehendingly at Mrs. Rosie.

"Ah, you aggravatin' little monkey, you!" said that lady, snatching it from Fred with one hand and giving it a shake, "stop that yellin', or I'll turn you up and give you such a spankin' as ye never had in all your born days. There, lie in that, then, if you won't," she added, dumping it into the cradle, and leaving it to its own reflections.

Baby, who seemed quite accustomed to this kind of treatment, immediately stopped crying, and became so absorbed in contemplating his own little fat fists as to forget all minor considerations.

"I suppose, Mr. Fred, you're going to stay all night?" inquired Mrs. Wilde, resuming the washing of her tumblers.

"I rather think not," said Fred, doubtfully, "my horse is lame, so I was forced to come here. If I find he is well enough to proceed, I will go on."

"If not, you'll stay; so we needn't thank you for your company," broke in the little hostess. "Hark! here's somebody else, as I live! I never did know one to come unexpected but another was sure to follow. Who's this, I wonder?"

The wonder was speedily solved, for a young man with an exceedingly soldier-like air walked the next instant into the barroom.

"Eh, is it possible? Captain Rogers, my dear fellow," said Fred, springing up, and extending his hand.

"Stanley! What, in the name of all that's wonderful, drove you here?" exclaimed the newcomer in surprise.

"Where did you expect I would be?" said Fred, smiling at his look of astonishment.

"With your regiment, to be sure! But hold on; I haven't seen my old sweetheart, Rosie, yet. Ah! Rosie, here you are, as pretty as ever, I see. Why didn't you send me an invitation to the wedding? Well, never mind; it's not too late to salute the bride yet!"

A sound box on the ear was his reward, while Mrs. Rosie's cheeks grew most becomingly red.

"What's this?" said the young man, who bore the little woman's indignation with most exemplary coolness, as his eye fell on the cradle, "a baby. La! what a comical little concern! I say, Rosie, you don't mean to say"—

But Rosie, who wasn't going to put up with his impudence, administered another box on the ear, with no very gentle hand, and seizing baby, immediately decamped.

Captain Rogers looked after her and laughed.

"Did you know, Fred, Rosie and I kept up quite a spirited flirtation winter before last? 'Pon my honor, I was quite spooney about her one time, too, but Josh Wilde came along and cut me out."

"I never knew you when you weren't spooney about some one," said Fred.

"Oh! to be sure! there's nothing like it. Don't you know what the song says:

"I am in love with twenty;
I could adore as many more;
There's nothing like a plenty."

"You hardly find as much time to flirt now as you used to, I fancy?" said Fred.

"Why, no, not quite; but when an opportunity presents itself I always improve it. By the way, Fred, they say old Percival has two or three deuced pretty daughters. Pshaw! man! never redden so; I intend to cultivate the old gentleman the first chance I get, for the sake of ma'amselle Estelle—Edith—what's the name?"

"You may spare yourself the trouble, my very dear friend. She would not notice you."

"Don't believe it," said Captain Rogers, glancing at the mirror. "Never knew a female heart could resist me yet! But nous verrons, mon ami! When have you seen Ralph De Lisle?"

Fred started at the name.

"Why, what of him?" he demanded.

"Oh, nothing, only they say you've cut him out there. Serves him right, too; he's an infernal villain!"

"Have you seen him lately?" said Fred, biting his lips to repress his impatience.

"Saw him yesterday with young Bates, off on some expedition of mischief. But, Stanley, is it really true that you've won his lady-love from him?"

"Captain Rogers, if you wish us to remain friends you will say no more on this subject," said Fred, sternly.

"Gadso! You're confoundedly touchy, Stanley. Well, that's one proof you're guilty. And now, may I ask, if I can do so without offending you, whither are you bound?"

"To N—— to join my regiment."

"That's lucky! Are you in much of a hurry?"

"Why, no; not particularly."

"Then might I ask you to grant me a favor?"

"Certainly, my dear Rogers; anything in my power."

"Thank you, thank you!" interrupted Rogers, eagerly. "These despatches I have been ordered to convey to Colonel ——; but an affair of a most pressing nature requires my presence in another direction. Now, if you would deliver them, you would render me an inestimable service."

"With all my heart, my good fellow, stand and deliver."

"It's rather a dangerous business," said Rogers, drawing a formidable-looking document from his breast-pocket. "You will have to make your way through the forest to reach Colonel M——'s quarters; and there are lurking parties of Indians and tories forever prowling about"—

"Say no more about it," interrupted Fred. "I am too well accustomed to danger to fear it; beside, who would shun danger in the service of his country?"

"You will start to-night, I suppose?"

"Oh, certainly; there is no time to lose! Here comes our pretty hostess, so not a word!"

"Well, Rosie, I'll take a drink and be off! What have you done with that pocket-edition of Josh Wilde?"

"None of your business, Will Rogers," replied Rosie, saucily. "Here, take this, and be off; I can't be bothered with you."

Captain Rogers laughed, drained the glass she handed to him, chucked her under the chin, saluted a careless good-by to Fred, sprang on his horse and amid many an admiring glance from the bright eyes of the village damsels, rode off.

"I think I had better follow him," remarked Fred, turning carelessly from the window.

"You'll wait for dinner, won't you?" said Rosie. "Come, now, I'll take no refusal. I have ever so many things to say to you. There, I knew you would," she added, as Fred smiled. "Just walk into the parlor; dinner'll be ready in a minute."

So saying, she laughingly pushed Fred into the parlor, closing the door behind her, and leaving him to amuse himself during her absence as best he might.

Fred seated himself, and taking up a volume of Goldsmith's works, was soon absorbed in the pages of "She Stoops to Conquer," when the door opened, and Mistress Rosie stood again before him.

"There's a gentleman out here inquiring for you, Mr. Fred," said the little hostess.

"For me?" said Fred in surprise. "Who can it be?"

"He looks like some of them old robbers in the pictures," said Mrs. Wilde, "with a long cloak wrapped round him, and his hat pulled way down over his eyes. Will I show him in?"

"I suppose so," said Fred, inwardly wondering who the mysterious personage could be.

The door opened, and the figure of a man, wrapped in a long, black cloak, with his hat pulled far down over his eyes, stood before him.

"To whom am I indebted for the honor of this visit?" said Fred, rising.

"To a friend, young man; one who is no stranger to you." And removing his hat, Fred beheld the white locks of the Hermit of the Cliffs.

"A friend you have indeed proved to me, good father," said Fred, frankly extending his hand. "Even now you were in my thoughts, though I hardly expected the honor of this visit."

"You will ever find me near you when danger is at hand," said the hermit.

"Danger?" said Fred. "And what danger threatens me now?"

"A soldier's life is always dangerous," replied the old man, evasively; "especially with so many enemies as you have."

"Let it come, then," said Fred, carelessly. "I am too well accustomed to danger to shrink from it now."

"Perhaps you think you carry a charmed life," said the hermit; "and because you have escaped the bullet of the executioner, and the halter of De Lisle, you can rush into greater dangers, and come forth scathless. Young man, I say to thee, beware! Last night, when the stars rode in solemn splendor through the heavens, I read thy fate. All was dark and ominous. The shadow of the scaffold fell redly across thy path. The steel of the assassin is sharpened for the heart of one you love, and for the crime of another shall you die. Again I say to thee, beware! Be warned in time, else you shall repent it when too late!"

The deep, intense, passionate solemnity with which he spoke awed involuntarily the fearless heart of Fred.

A sensation of fear, not for himself, but for one dearer than all the world beside, crept over him.

"Old man!" he exclaimed, seizing him by the wrist with a vise-like grip, "who is this for whom the steel of the assassin is prepared? Speak, and tell me, for I must know."

"That I saw not," replied the hermit, calmly. "Can the lips of man reveal what the stars speak not? Guard against the danger which hangs over yourself, and trust the rest to a Higher Power!"

"Pshaw! I might have known 'twas but silly raving," said Fred, shaking off the superstitious feeling that had for a moment overcome him. "If you have nothing more definite than this to warn me against, good father, I fear your words have been in vain."

"And thou wilt not be warned?" said the old man, sadly. "It is only when the danger is at hand thou wilt believe me? Did I not warn thee before, and did not my words prove true? Hast thou forgotten thy powerful enemy, De Lisle?"

"I am not likely to forget him; but I fear him not," said Fred, scornfully.

"So thou didst say before," said the hermit, calmly; "yet thou didst fall in his power, and would have died by his hand but for the heroism of a young girl. The same thing may happen again, when there will be no one at hand to aid you."

"Forewarned is forearmed," said Fred. "Ralph De Lisle will find it not so easy to get me once more within his clutches; and should we ever meet in open warfare, then, good father, you will find it your duty to bid him beware, instead of me!"

"Rash youth! thou canst not read the book of fate as I can," said the hermit, sorrowfully. "Again I tell thee, danger is at hand—nay, hangs over thy head, and over one for whom thou wouldst give thy life. In the hour of doom thou canst not say there was no one to warn thee of thy danger."

The tone of profound melancholy in which the last words were uttered touched Fred. Not that he believed what the old man said—his words he considered the mere idle raving of a moonstruck idiot, who warned him of danger after hearing of his narrow escapes, and knowing De Lisle was still his enemy. But his evident affection for him and interest in his fate reached his heart.

"Accept, at least, my thanks for the interest you manifest in me," said Fred; "although I may never make use of your warning, I feel grateful to you for it. And now, let me ask you, why should you care so much for one who is a stranger to you, and whose father you have spoken of in the most opprobrious terms?"

A moment after he was sorry he had asked a question which seemed to act like a galvanic shock on the hermit, whose head fell heavily on his clasped hands, while his whole frame quivered with emotion.

"My dear sir," said Fred, starting up, "if I have said anything to hurt your feelings, believe me it was quite unintentional, and I am sincerely sorry for it."

"Say no more, say no more!" said the hermit, raising his head, and startling the young man by the deadly paleness of his face. "I am subject to these sudden shocks, and do not mind them. Some day, perhaps, before I die, should you survive me, you will know who I am. But until that time comes, let what you already know of me suffice. You think me crazed—perhaps I am; but there is at least 'method in my madness.' Believe me to be your friend—your best friend on earth. You say you are a stranger to me. Believe it not. Long before you saw me, I knew you; and when you least fancied it I have been watching over you. I ask neither your love nor confidence in return. Should we both live, the time will come when you will give both willingly. And now, farewell! I have come to warn you, but you heeded not my words. In the hour of your darkest trial, when your summer friends desert you in the winter of affliction, I shall be near. When danger threatens, look for me. Until then, farewell."

He wrapped his cloak around him, drew his hat down over his eyes, bowed with stately humility, and was gone ere Fred could frame an answer.

"Strange being!" thought the young man, throwing himself into a seat, and leaning his head on his hand. "How dark and mysterious are his words! Can it be that that simple old man really reads the secrets of futurity? 'Thou hast hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes.' Wonderful being! Will those ominous predictions come true? I have already seen his words verified, and why may not these likewise? 'The shadow of the scaffold falls across my path.' Well, though I have escaped twice, I begin to think I have been born for a halter, after all. I can easily account for my narrow escape from shipwreck by the wise old proverb, that any one born to be hanged will never be drowned. It's a pleasant anticipation, truly."

"Why, Mr. Fred, you look as dismal as if you had lost your last relation," said the merry voice of Rosie Wilde, breaking in upon his reverie. "Goodness gracious me! have you seen a ghost, or are you thinking of committing suicide? If you are, I've a bottle of iode-

lum out in the bar that will send you sleeping comfortably to the other world in less than no time. Ho! ha! ha!"

"Egad! I've a strong notion to follow her advice, and cheat Jack Ketch, after all," muttered Fred.

"Well, now, dinner's ready; so never mind talking to yourself just now, for fear I might overhear you. So come along."

Fred laughingly accompanied Mrs. Wilde to the dining-room, where they sat down to a comfortable meal, to which both did ample justice.

An hour after, as Fred stood in the parlor with Mrs. Wilde, previous to starting, another horseman galloped up and alighted at the inn door.

"I'll have General Washington himself here next, I expect," said Mrs. Wilde, who was rocking the cradle. "Your coming brought them all, I think; for I haven't had so many visitors before, this month of Sundays."

"Landlady!" called a high, imperious voice, that made Fred start and flush to the temples.

"Coming, coming!" answered Mrs. Wilde, hurrying from the room.

Half an hour passed by. Fred stood with his arms folded across his breast, all his indifference gone, and a look of fierce sternness and intense hatred on his face. Well he recognized that voice.

"Gone at last," said Mrs. Wilde, again making her appearance.

Fred looked out, a young man passed out of the door, sprang on his horse, and rode off, but not before Fred had caught a full view of his face.

It was Ralph De Lisle.

"Well, I regret to say I must leave you now, Mrs. Wilde," said Fred, turning from the window, and striving to banish the shadow that had gathered on his brow.

"Very sorry to hear it," said Mrs. Rosie, "but I hope to see you soon again."

"Rest assured of that, my dear madam," said Fred. "I shall certainly visit my little namesake as soon as may be. Good-by until we meet again."

Raising to his lips the plump little hand she extended, Fred passed out, sprang on his horse, and was soon out of sight, while the pretty little hostess of the "Bottle and Bowl" stood in the doorway, watching him until he disappeared.

Night found him making his way slowly and with difficulty along the slippery forest path in the direction pointed out by his friend, Captain Rogers. It was a gloomy, disagreeable night. A thin, drizzling rain was falling, a cold, sharp wind was sighing drearily through the trees. There was no light, save the faint, sickly glow of the spectral moon, as she lifted her wan face over the bleak tree-tops, through the dull, dark clouds that scudded across the sky.

Urging his horse with rein and spur, Fred bent his head to the storm, and proceeded slowly onward. There was a strange presentiment of evil hanging over him—an oppression of spirits he had never felt before. It might have been caused by the words of the hermit, his chance glimpse of De Lisle, which he felt half-inclined to consider an omen of evil, or it might have been caused by the dismal night, and the lonely path he was pursuing. He strove to shake off these superstitious fancies, knowing there might be more tangible evils at hand, for there were always lurking bodies of Indians prowling about in the woods. Now and then the cry of some wild animal would break upon his ear, making his horse start and snort with terror, but no enemy had molested him, and ere morning he trusted to be far from danger.

Suddenly an abrupt turn in the road brought him in view of a scene that made him start and draw back in alarm.

In the center of a large semicircle, evidently the work of nature, and not of art, a large fire was burning. Gathered around it were some twenty half naked, hideously painted savages, who, with a large keg, which Fred well knew contained rum, were evidently bent upon making a night of it, in spite of the inclemency of the weather.

To escape without being discovered was now Fred's only idea. He turned noiselessly to proceed in another direction, but his horse reared at the sudden blaze of light, and gave a loud neigh of fear.

It reached the keen ears of the Indians. Snatching up their weapons, they sprang to their feet, while a series of diabolical yells rent the air, followed by an ominous silence.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STAKE.

"Through the leafy halls of the wild old wood,
Rang an echo full and free.
To the savage shout of a fearful band,
As they bound the white man foot and hand
To the sacrificial tree."

—H. Harlon Stephens.

ESCAPE was now out of the question. Resolved to sell his life as dearly as possible, Fred drew his pistol, and two of the foremost savages, with wild howls, bit the ground. Maddened by the sight, the remainder sprang fiercely upon him, and in spite of his desperate resistance, he was overpowered by numbers and securely bound. They next turned their attention to their fallen companions. One of them was only

wounded, but the other was quite dead. A long, low wail was heard, as he who appeared to be their chief touched the fresh scalp-lock which dangled at his belt.

The savages now gathered in a cluster together, and appeared to hold a consultation, while Fred, bound to a tree, inwardly wondered what Dame Fortune had in store for him next. In the red light of the fire, the scene resembled one of Salvator Rosa's wild paintings. The dark, gloomy forest in the background, through which the wind sighed a dirge-like chant; the wild faces, gleaming eyes, and horribly painted bodies of his captors, giving them the look of demons in the lurid glow of the fire.

Fred waited eagerly for the result of this conference. Now and then he would catch some fierce exclamation; but as they spoke in their own language, he, of course, understood not a word. Often, too, he would catch a look directed to himself that boded him no good. At last, they seemed to have arrived at some conclusion; for, rising to their feet, they returned to their former places round the fire, glaring savagely upon him as they passed.

Left alone, Fred was soon lost in thought. He seemed to himself a mere football in the hands of Fate, to be tossed wherever the fickle goddess willed. In the power of the Indians, he well knew that death, speedy and bloody, must be his doom. Death and he had been too often face to face for him to shrink from it now; but to die thus, afar from all who ever knew or cared for him, might have chilled the stoutest heart. To die on the field of battle, fighting for his country, would have been glory; but such a death as he well knew was now in store for him, was indeed appalling. He thought of Edith, freed from the power of her mortal foe, and happy at home, and wondered if she would ever hear of his fate. He thought of the strange, mysterious hermit, and of his dark prediction of coming danger so soon fulfilled.

He turned his eyes to where sat his captors. Some of them, overpowered by the effects of the fire-water, were stretched on the ground asleep, looking like dark statues in their rigid repose. The others still sat drinking, some whooping and yelling fearfully in their intoxication, the rest silently staring at them, evidently more than half stupefied.

Fred's position was painful in the extreme. The ligatures which bound his wrists behind him were tied so tightly that they seemed cutting their way into his flesh. His position was painfully constrained, his head being the only portion of his body he could move.

To add to his sufferings, the storm, which had for several hours been threatening, now burst in all its fury. A blaze of lightning, so vivid that it seemed as though the heavens were one vast sheet of flame, followed by a terrific crash of thunder and a flood of rain, and the storm was upon them in full fury. Roused from their slumbers, the stunned and half-drunken savages gathered together in evident dismay. The wind howled a perfect tornado, the lightning still flashed in one continual sulphurous glare, the thunder pealed as though the heavens were rending asunder, and the rain fell in perfect torrents. A tall tree, scarcely three yards from where Fred stood, was shivered to atoms by a blinding flash, and another was torn violently up by the roots and hurled almost at his feet.

For nearly two hours the storm continued in all its fury. Then the sullen clouds began slowly to break away, the lightning still flashed, but at rare intervals; the thunder growled far off in the distance, the wind abated its fury, and though the rain still fell, it was no longer in drenching torrents. The savages recovering from the effects of their first alarm, and still stupid with liquor, again stretched themselves on the wet ground, and soon lay motionless, like hideous figures in wax.

Fred, wet, cold, and benumbed, stood waiting the approach of day. His arms felt as though they were dead, having swollen from being so tightly bound. As he thought of the fearful fate for which he was most probably reserved, he had more than once, during the raging of the storm, wished that some friendly flash of lightning had freed his spirit, and borne him from their power.

The hours of that dreary night wore on, but Fred thought it the longest he had ever known. The gray, foggy light of morning at last stole over the tree-tops, coming slowly and unwillingly, as though reluctant to behold the disasters of the preceding night. Fred recollected that at that time, twenty-four hours before, he bade adieu to Edith, and something akin to despair filled his heart as the certainty that he should never see her again stole over him.

His captors had by this time arisen, and were now busily engaged in making their morning meal. This over, some of them went in search of their horses where they had left them the preceding night, while two others approached the prisoner; and having unfastened the thongs which bound him placed before him a sort of hard, coarse cake made of Indian corn, a gourd filled with water, and made signs for him to eat.

It was some time before he could comply, for his hands were stiff and benumbed, and the food none of the most

palatable. Knowing, however, nature must be sustained, he essayed to eat; and by the time he had finished his meal, the rest returned with the horses.

Fred was permitted to mount his own horse; and with one of his captors placed on either side of him, dashed off at a rapid gallop.

They rode on for several hours, avoiding with the utmost care all white settlements, and a little before noon they halted at a running stream to rest their wearied animals. Fred alighted, and was bound as before, to prevent his escaping, while his captors once more regaled themselves with their coarse food.

All traces of the previous night's storm had now vanished. The sun shone in unclouded splendor, and at any other time Fred would have admired the beautiful scene around him, but now his eyes were fixed on his captors.

They were a savage, bloodthirsty looking set, hideously painted, and frightfully ugly, looking fiercer and more barbarous in the clear light of day than when he had seen them first. They ate in solemn silence; and having finished, again mounted and rode off, seldom speaking, save when he who appeared to be their chief addressed to them a few brief words, evidently concerning their journey.

Toward evening the party again halted, and made preparations for the night. Fred was again bound, but in such a manner as would permit him to lie down. The savages then proceeded to kindle a fire; and seating themselves around it after partaking of their evening meal, of which Fred received a share, they stretched themselves on the damp earth, and were soon buried in sleep, with the exception of one who remained to keep guard.

It was a lovely night. The moon rode in radiant brightness through the blue arch of heaven. One by one the solemn stars came out, looking with their pitying eyes on the pale face of the captive. The cool south wind lifted his long, dark locks off his noble brow. The air was redolent with the odor of flowers, and with a singsong sound in his ears, Fred fell asleep.

And sleeping, he dreamed. Once again in fancy he stood by the side of Edith, whispering in her ear "the tale which ladies love to hear." Suddenly a shadow fell across his path. Edith was torn from his side, and with the rapidity of thought, he found himself swinging by the neck from a halter. A shriek of mortal agony reached his ear, and looking down, he beheld Edith struggling in the arms of De Lisle, now transformed into a hideously painted savage. With a start, he awoke to find his dream, in part, realized.

The red hue of coming morn was already crimsoning the sky. His savage captors were up and gathered together in a circle, as if holding a consultation. Among them, Fred beheld the fierce, dark faces of three or four of De Lisle's tory band; and standing above him, with his arms folded across his breast, and a look of fiendish triumph on his face, was Ralph De Lisle himself.

"So," said De Lisle, slowly hissing the words through his closed teeth, "so, Fred Stanley, we have met again."

"So it seems," replied Fred, calmly.

"You see, sir, you are in the hands of fate, and you cannot escape me. No doubt you fancied, when you so cleverly freed yourself from my power, that you were safe. Now you are convinced of your mistake. Since our last meeting I have daily prayed I might soon hold you in my clutches once more; and now my prayer is granted."

"Which proves that your master, the devil, is good to his own," said Fred.

"You are pleased to be facetious, my good friend. Well, I can excuse that in one whose hours are numbered. Fred Stanley, Dame Fortune has favored you long. One time I almost fancied you bore a charmed life; but Fate can bear you no further than the end, and your hour has come. For your present risk, you have no one to thank but yourself; and, being such a hot-headed fool, our dusky friends yonder will prevent your getting into any more scrapes by sending you to Heaven, where you belong, the first opportunity. Dream no longer that you can escape. Yonder sun which is rising, you will never see set. Ere three hours we shall have reached the Indian village, where the stake is prepared, and your doom is sealed. No power, either in heaven or earth, can save you now. And if, as you say, the devil is my master, I most sincerely thank him for preserving you from the rope, since it has reserved you for the far more horrible fate of death by slow torture. I shall faithfully, like a true friend, stand by you to the last, and witnessing your death-agony, console you by the agreeable information that, in spite of fate, Edith Percival shall yet be mine. Doubtless she imagines, as you did a few hours ago, that she has escaped me forever. Like you, she will find her mistake ere long; and I swear, she shall repent in dust and ashes for her scorn of me. Ha! you change color. I thought that would touch you. I see you can fear for her though not for yourself. Well, every indignity that woman can endure shall be hers until your dainty lady-love shall weep for the hour she was born."

De Lisle paused, while his eyes actually blazed. An infernal spirit might

have envied the diabolical triumph that shone in his face.

"Villain! monster! devil!" cried Fred, almost maddened by his words. "An hour of fearful reckoning will yet come for all this."

"You are disposed to moralize, my dear Stanley," said De Lisle, with his usual mocking sneer. "Well, doubtless, the near approach of death does incline men that way. As for the future reckoning you threaten me with, believe in it if you will; as for me, I have a spirit above such hypocritical whining and preachers' cant. However, I will not argue the matter now, as in a few hours you will have an opportunity of knowing which of us is right. If, when you reach the other world, you really do see the gentleman in black—my master, you know—just give him my compliments, will you, and tell him I trust he will always remain as true a friend to me as he has up to the present. Ah! here comes my friend Long Knife—suggestive name, isn't it? I will leave you to meditation and prayer, hoping you will offer up a good word for Edith and me while I consult with yonder dusky chieftain." And lifting his hat with mock politeness, De Lisle turned on his heel and strode away.

It would be impossible to give an idea of the torrent of fiery, passionate, maddening thoughts that leaped in burning chaos through the brain of Fred. The image of Edith in the power of De Lisle, that demon in human form, was ever before him. And he knew of the fate in store for her, and yet was unable to assist her. He grew maddened, frenzied at the thought, and struggled to burst his bonds, until, finding all his efforts ineffectual, he sank back exhausted.

Standing at a few yards distant, talking to a frightfully painted savage—who, from the number of feathers waving from his scalplock, appeared to be a chief of unusual distinction—stood De Lisle. He saw the impression his words had made and the smile of gratified hatred on his lips; and the light of triumphant malice in his eyes made him appear more of a demon than ever.

After a few moments' rapid conversation, the parties separated, and mounting their horses, prepared to start. Fred rose as before, guarded by two of the Indians. De Lisle put himself at the head of his own men, not more than half a dozen in number, and all dashed off.

For over three hours they rode on rapidly, and almost in silence. Now and then De Lisle would turn to converse with the man Paul Snowe, who formed one of his party; but this was only at intervals, and each seemed too much absorbed in his own reflections to talk.

At length, as they reached the summit of a high hill, the whole party drew rein, and paused for a moment. Below them lay an Indian village, enveloped by encircling hills, and forming a sort of circle of thirty huts or thereabouts. The whole population of the village seemed to have turned out to meet them; and with wild shouts, more than half of Fred's captors dashed off, leaving him with De Lisle's men and the others to follow more slowly.

As Fred neared the village he turned to gaze on them, and was forced to think that a more repulsive-looking set he had never beheld. The women were even worse than the men, with their flat, unintellectual-looking faces, dirty persons, and savage, unpitying eyes. Every look was bent upon him, as he rode past, but all were fierce and stern, and even the children seemed to glare with their dark eyes as fiendishly as their parents.

One of the Indians made a sign for Fred to dismount; and bidding him follow, led the way toward one of the huts, the crowd opening right and left to allow them to pass. Pushing aside the skin which served for a door, he motioned him to enter, and then binding him hand and foot, he seated himself beside the door to keep guard, with his scowling black eyes fixed on his prisoner, with the steady gaze of a basilisk.

Fred had made no resistance, knowing it would be worse than useless; and now he sat with his eyes fixed upon the ground, striving to collect his thoughts and think calmly. In vain, all was wild confusion in his heart and brain, everything seemed red and dancing before his eyes. Death! death! seemed written in fiery characters everywhere he turned. Never had he felt so dreadful a certainty that his last hour was come, than when sitting there, expecting each moment to be led forth to the stake. He felt at that bitter moment that De Lisle's words were true, and that it would have been better to have died by the halter than to be reserved for the fearful doom now in store for him. His bodily suffering almost equaled the mental, for the ligatures which bound him were cutting into the quivering flesh, and his posture was so constrained that he could not move. He strove to pray; but the hated image of De Lisle, at such times, would rise before him, driving away the pitying form of his good angel, and filling his mind with fierce, bitter thoughts.

And so two or three hours passed away. His savage jailer still crouched at the door, glaring upon him with his eyes of fire, his half naked, horribly painted body and scarred face giving him the appearance of some hideous painting, rather than a living man. Now and then a bright ray of sunshine would steal in through some chink, falling like an angel hand on the black, glossy locks

of the captive. There was a drowsy stillness in the air, rendered more oppressive by the dull, monotonous hum that came from the village. At length, a profound stillness for a few moments succeeded. Fred listened in wonder, and even his guard betrayed some sign of interest. They could almost hear each other breathe, so profound was the stillness, when lo! a yell so fierce, so savage, so diabolical, that it seemed to come from the depths of pandemonium, broke upon their ears. With an answering cry, the Indian guard sprang to his feet, and turned to Fred with such a look of fiendish triumph, that he could no longer doubt what these shouts purported. They were his death-warrant.

A moment after, and the skin at the entrance was burst rudely aside, and two fierce, hideous-looking warriors entered and spoke a few words to the guard, who immediately rushed from the hut. Then approaching Fred, they severed his bonds, and made signs for him to rise. With some difficulty he obeyed, for his limbs were cramped and painful in the extreme. Then motioning him to follow, they led the way into the air.

It was a golden, glowing summer day. The sun shone in a sky of unclouded blue, and poured a glow of light and heat over the green earth. The air was heavy with the odor of flowers, and the clear chirping of numberless birds mingled gently with the dreamy murmur of the trees. Never had nature appeared so lovely to him before, as he cast one long, last, lingering look around.

A series of unearthly yells greeted him as he appeared. The whole population of the village—warriors, squaws, and papooses had assembled around a large stake, firmly driven in the yielding earth, and were glaring upon him with their fierce eyes.

Around the stake was a pile of fagots ready to be set on fire, and leading him toward it, they bound his arms firmly behind him to the stake.

Almost unknown to himself, there had been hitherto a wild hope still lingering in Fred's breast—a hope that fate, or rather Providence, had not reserved him for a doom so fearful. But now the last faint spark of hope died out, and with it went all his wild, tumultuous thoughts and a deep, settled calm took their place.

He looked up. Before him stood De Lisle, his arms folded across his breast, gazing upon him with his evil eyes. The sneering smile of a demon was on his face, all the intense hatred and revenge he had ever cherished glowed in his features, and a light of intense malignity glittered in his serpent-like eyes.

"Well, Fred Stanley, we have met for the last time," he said, mockingly. "You see now the death you were born for—your doom is to roast alive by a slow fire."

Fred made no reply. Fixing his eyes on De Lisle's face, he gazed upon him so long, so fixed, so steadily, that involuntarily he quailed before him. It was but for a moment, however, and recovering himself, he went on:

"And have you no message to send to Edith? I go from here to-night, and with the help of my master, before referred to, I shall carry her off in spite of them all, to where they will never again behold her. Look as fierce as you please, my good fellow; I rather enjoy it than otherwise, since it tells me you feel. Once, had I not hated you so intensely, with a hatred that became part of my very being, I could have envied you for the heart you had won—a heart which I will yet trample under my feet, until your fate will seem an enviable one compared with hers. She despised me, spurned me with contempt for the gay, the handsome, the fascinating, the gallant Fred Stanley; and in her turn she will learn what it is to be spurned. No one who has ever yet injured me escaped. To the very ends of the earth I would follow them, like a bloodhound following a trail, until I had wreaked my vengeance. You wronged me, insulted me, and you see the result—a fate, so dreadful that manhood must shudder to contemplate it, will be yours. Her turn comes next; for now that you stand on the threshold of eternity, I swear to you, Fred Stanley, that neither heaven nor earth can turn me from my purpose."

"Monster!" exclaimed Fred, in a voice that sounded low and unnatural with intense horror, "is this the return you make for all Major Percival has done for you? For myself I neither have nor shall ask for mercy from you, fiend that you are—I would not accept it if offered; but gratitude to the old man, who has been more than a father to you, should restrain you from a crime that even those bloodthirsty savages around us would shrink from committing. Man! man! if there is one spark of human nature in your fiendish heart, you will not bring the gray hairs of that old man with sorrow to the grave."

"Ha! ha! and Fred Stanley can plead for the man who spurned him like a dog!" laughed De Lisle, scornfully. "If you continue in this strain, I shall begin to think you are a saint—have you canonized, and let Edith know you died in the odor of sanctity. Your eloquence is quite lost, my good friend; that one spark of human nature, you see, does not exist in my fiendish heart. Say, my friend, was it not for pretty Edith you were pleading that time, instead of her doting old fool of a father? Spare him! ha! ha! why, I have a long score against him, too, that must be wiped out by a

few of his doubloons. When he refused to compel his love-sick daughter to marry me, I vowed vengeance against him as well as the rest; and, as I don't like to be in people's debt, I shall take care to cancel it as soon as possible."

"If there ever was a devil in human form, it is you, Ralph De Lisle!" exclaimed Fred, with a look of hatred and loathing; "to pursue thus with the vengeance of a tiger, an old man and helpless girl for some fancied wrong—had it been a man—but old age and helplessness! O coward!"

De Lisle's face grew livid with rage, as he half drew a pistol, and advanced a step toward him.

Fred observed the action; and his heart bounded with the hope that in his rage De Lisle might shoot him, and thus save him from a more terrible fate.

The hope was in vain, however. De Lisle saw the quick gleam of his eye, and stepping back, he replaced the pistol in his belt, saying, in his customary sarcastic tone:

"No, don't flatter yourself I'll end your sufferings so speedily. I have no intention of depriving my good friends here of the pleasant scene they anticipate. I must confess it is rather new for me to allow any one to call me a coward, and let him escape immediate chastisement; but circumstances alter cases, you know. I perceive Long Knife approaching, to give the signal for the fagots to be lighted, and our red-skinned friends are growing impatient. So farewell, Fred Stanley! I wish you a pleasant journey to the other world, and a cordial welcome when you arrive there!"

He bowed with most ceremonious politeness, and stepped aside, as the savage chief approached. Waving his hand as a signal, one of the Indians approached, and thrust a lighted brand among the combustibles.

In a moment, the whole pile was in a blaze. With screeches and yells that can be likened to nothing earthly, the savages joined hands, and danced madly around the flames that rose crackling, and blazing, and roaring as though exulting in their power.

Fred raised his eyes to the bright sky above him for one farewell glance. It was such a glorious day, bright and radiant with sunlight. All nature looked peaceful and lovely; in the breast of men alone fierce, dark passions existed—they alone thirsted for each other's lives.

Higher and higher rose the flames, fiercer and fiercer they blazed, faster and faster they spread, until he stood alone within a red, lurid circle of fire. The heat and smoke were beginning to grow unbearable, for the flames had not reached him. Fixing his eyes on the devouring monster, Fred silently committed his soul to Heaven. One last thought of Edith, and then all were turned to that dread unknown to which he was so rapidly approaching.

The cries, whoops, yells and screeches of the savages each moment increased, as they danced madly without the ring of fire. He scarcely heeded or heard them, until suddenly they died away. Every voice was arrested—the mad dance ceased—and all stood as if transfixed. Following the direction toward which every eye was now turned, Fred beheld a sight which filled him with amazement.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

"Oh! ask me not to speak thy fate—
Oh! tempt me not to tell,
What doom shall make thee desolate,
The wrong thou mayst not quell.
Away! away! for death would be
E'en as a mercy unto thee."

THE cause of their astonishment was soon explained. There, before them, like a spirit, in his flowing robes and snowy hair, stood the Hermit of the Cliffs!

With a grunt expressive of surprise and satisfaction, not unmingled with awe, the chief advanced to meet him. There was something truly imposing in the majestic appearance of the old man—his fantastic robes fluttering in the air, his long white hair and beard flowing over his shoulders. There was an evident reverence and respect for this singular old man in the hearts of the Indians, who looked upon him as a superior being—something more akin to the Great Spirit than to his fellow men.

Pointing with his hand toward the prisoner, the hermit addressed the chief in his own language, in a tone more of command than entreaty. At first, his words were listened to impatiently—then angrily—and finally with a sort of awe. As the hermit went on, increasing in vehemence, the warrior listened in superstitious silence, and when he had concluded, he bowed his head, and, followed by the hermit, turned toward his own people who had stood watching them during their conference, with looks of mingled respect and curiosity, and began addressing them in their own language. As a matter of course, Fred understood not a word; but, from the savage eyes that were every now and then turned toward him, he judged he was the subject of their conversation.

Surprise, first, and then rage, was depicted on every face, while knives and tomahawks were brandished, with fierce yells. But the loud, harsh voice of the chief made itself heard above the din, in tones of anger and command. The warriors gradually relapsed into sullen,

dogged silence, while every eye was directed toward the captive, and glared with concentrated passion and disappointment.

When the chieftain ceased, the hermit addressed the enraged crowd. High and clear, like the silvery tones of a trumpet, his voice rang out, soothing the waters of passion which the words of their chief had lashed into fury. As they listened their noisy demonstrations of rage gave place to low, deep growls and sullen mutterings, while they glared like wild beasts upon Fred, whose position at the stake was now almost unbearable.

As he folded his arms across his breast, and ceased speaking, the warriors fell sullenly back, and the chief himself, leaping over the burning circle, freed the bonds of Fred, and motioned him to follow. No second invitation was necessary to make him leave his place of torture, and the next moment he stood beside the hermit, who scarcely gave him a single glance, as he turned again and addressed the chief.

During these proceedings, which occupied but a few moments, De Lisle had stood watching them, like one who cannot believe what he sees. Now he advanced to where the trio stood, and with a face perfectly livid with rage and disappointment, he turned toward the hermit, and angrily exclaimed:

"Sir, what means this? By what devilish art have you bewitched these savages into giving up their prey?"

"It means, sir, that your evil machinations are again defeated by me. I use no devilish arts, as you well know; but there is a power higher than that of man—a power that can defeat man's most cunning scheme, in its own good time!" answered the hermit, with grave dignity.

"Death and fury! Old man, cease your prating!" exclaimed the maddened De Lisle. "Though this copper-colored fool here has given him up, by heaven! I will disappoint you yet, and you shall bear from hence but a dead carcass."

He drew a pistol as he spoke; but, ere he could fulfil his threat, it was struck from his hand by the chief, who brandished his tomahawk before his eyes with a fierce yell, and would doubtless have prevented his ever drawing another, but for the intervention of the hermit. Motioning De Lisle back with a majestic wave of the hand, he said:

"Away, sir! One word from me, and you and your band of cutthroats there will, in five minutes, be in eternity! Though you can show no mercy to others, mercy shall be shown to you. Away with you!—your very presence is pollution! Obey, most reverend dealer in [illegible]," said De Lisle, with a mocking bow and smile, though his face was perfectly ghastly with suppressed passion, "but think not, though you are triumphant now, you have conquered Ralph De Lisle. I swear I will yet have threefold vengeance on thee, hoary sorcerer, and on this double-dyed traitor beside you!"

With a fierce exclamation Fred sprang forward, and De Lisle would doubtless have been felled to the earth, but the hermit laid his hand on the young man's shoulder, and said, sternly:

"I command you, do it not. 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.' Leave this fiend incarnate to a higher power. His race will soon be run."

"Dare say you so, good father?" said De Lisle, ironically. "It may be so, but I will send a few of your particular friends before me, to announce my coming. I regret leaving such pleasant company, but 'necessity knows no law.' I trust soon to have the pleasure of meeting you both again. Until then!"

He bowed, lifted his hat, and with the same cold, sneering smile on his lip, turned away. Whispering a few words in the ear of Paul Snowe, whose eyes were fixed as if fascinated on the hermit, he gave his men the order to mount. Ere five minutes had elapsed, they were in their saddles and away.

"We must follow their example," said the hermit to Fred. Then, turning to the chief, he spoke a few words in the Indian language, to which the other answered by a nod; and making a sign that they should follow him, he turned and forced his way through the group of dogged-looking warriors, whose glances toward Fred were anything but friendly.

Fred's horse was led forth, together with the hermit's. The chief himself mounted, and gave some order to his followers, upon which some half dozen sprang into their saddles, and the whole party dashed off.

As they reached the summit of the hill, Fred paused a moment to look back. Scarcely eight hours had elapsed since he had stood in the same spot—but how different were his feelings! Then he stood on the threshold of death, with his deadly foe on one side and bloodthirsty savages on the other. Now he was safe and free, or at least on the high road to freedom, saved by the same mysterious being who had saved his life before. All the events since his capture had passed so rapidly that he was almost tempted to believe it was but a troubled dream. A glance, however, at his dusky companions soon convinced him of the unpleasant reality, and quickening his pace, he descended the hill, and bade a last and unreluctant adieu to the Indian village.

Near the spot where Fred had been made captive, their savage escort left

them, and the preserver and preserved went on their journey alone.

For a time they rode on in silence. Both were too deeply absorbed in thought to converse. At length the hermit looked up and said:

"Yours was a narrow escape, my friend. You were indeed literally snatched 'a brand from the burning.'"

"And to you I owe it," replied Fred, gratefully. "You seem fated to place me under a debt of gratitude. I will not attempt to thank you for saving me from a doom so dreadful. No words of mine"—

"I want no thanks," interrupted the hermit. "If you really feel grateful, let your gratitude be inward, and manifest itself by actions instead of words. I know the world too well to place much confidence in hollow promises!"

"How did you discover I was a prisoner?" inquired Fred, whose curiosity could no longer be restrained.

"Very easily. I foresaw danger when you started, and followed you."

"Then you were near me during my journey," said Fred. "I wonder the savages did not discover you."

"I was near you at first, but was unable to ride forward as rapidly as your party. However, I followed your trail, and reached the village a few hours after, and providentially in time to save your life."

"It is most wonderful that they would surrender a captive at the stake," said Fred. "Your power, sir, seems to be omnipotent."

"I had a strong claim on the gratitude of the chief," said the hermit. "Once, when I found him alone, wounded and almost dying, I had him borne to my dwelling and nursed him until he recovered. Since then he has been anxious to redeem the promise made at the time, to grant me the first favor I ever asked of him, and as your life chanced to be the first, he was forced to grant it. Beside," he added, with a smile, "his superstitious followers consider me something more than mortal, and labor under the delusion that in offending me they will draw upon themselves the wrath of the Great Spirit."

"Your power extends over more than superstitious savages," said Fred. "My father, stern and haughty as he is, quails before you, as he has never done before any other living man. Would I knew the secret of your mysterious power!"

A shadow passed over the face of the hermit, and when he spoke again his voice was unusually low and solemn.

"Some day, ere long, perhaps, you will learn all. Until that time rest in peace, and believe this mystery is all for the best. I go now to my home on the cliffs, but something tells me that we shall soon meet again."

"Well, let it be for joy or for sorrow, the meeting will be welcome," replied Fred; "but why should you reside in that lonely spot—why not seek a home with your friends?"

"Friends?" repeated the hermit, bitterly, "who in this selfish world deserve that sacred name? No, I have done with trusting the world; my experience has taught me how much reliance there is to be placed in it. I would be alone with nature. Watching the mighty, ever-moaning sea, listening to the wild shrieks of the wind or gazing upon the blue lightning, I am happy. I never wish to mingle with my fellowmen more."

"Strange, eccentric being!" thought Fred, as he gazed on the pale face of his companion, now lit up by enthusiasm. "What strange vicissitudes he must have passed through!"

"What do you think now of my prediction?" said the hermit, quietly, after a few moments' pause.

"Think?" replied Fred, "why, that your prophecy has in a most unpleasantly short time been fulfilled, and I must apologize for ever presuming to doubt its truth."

"I fear still greater dangers are in store for you," said the hermit, gloomily.

"From what quarter now?" inquired Fred.

"From your mortal enemy, De Lisle. There was something perfectly fiendish in his look as he left us, and it needs no soothsayer to tell he is even now plotting against you."

"Well, it seems to be a drawn battle," said Fred, with a half smile; "he plotting and you counterplotting. As for me, I seem like a rudderless craft in the stream of life, drifting whichever way the current sets. It is useless striving to guard against dangers when we cannot foresee in what shape they may come. So, my dear sir, I shall preserve the even tenor of my way, and place my trust in Providence and you!"

"Youth is always hopeful and blindly trusting," said the hermit; "but Heaven forbid my presentiments should prove true, for there may be dangers worse than death. Disgrace to you would be a thousandfold worse."

"Disgrace!" exclaimed Fred, almost furiously, while his face flushed; "who dares couple my name with disgrace?"

"De Lisle will endeavor to do so, rest assured," said the hermit; "there—there is no need of looking so fierce about it. Do you imagine there is anything he can do to injure you in the opinion of the world, more especially in that of the Percivals, that he will not do? And, speaking of the Percivals, I presume that is your present destination?"

"No," said Fred, "I go there no more.

Would to heaven I had never gone there!"

"It would have been better for all parties," said the hermit; "but the past can never be recalled, and you can only endeavor to atone for it by absenting yourself for the future. Edith's love for you has remained firm throughout, and will to the end—for her you need have no fear. The war will soon be over, and there can be little doubt which side will be victorious. Major Percival's views may change in time, and his fair daughter may yet be your bride. Who can tell what the future may bring forth?"

"Who, indeed?" thought Fred, "though I fancy that prediction is altogether too good to prove true."

"And now farewell!" said the hermit, when they emerged from the forest road. "I go to my wild home among the cliffs, while you go to follow the path of glory. It may be, when we meet again, many things now hidden in darkness will be brought to light. When in danger, remember you have a friend in the Hermit of the Cliffs."

He turned in a direction opposite to that taken by Fred, and was soon out of sight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LAST RESOLVE.

"There was a laughing devil in his sneer,
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope, withering, fled—and Mercy signed farewell."

—The Corsair.

MONTHS passed away. Hoary winter had shrunk back before bright, smiling spring, and the golden summer days were approaching again. Many exciting events had taken place since the circumstance recorded in the last chapter, for the war was over, and America was free.

It was a dark, sultry night in June. In the back parlor of an unpretending looking inn sat two men conversing. They were our old acquaintances, Ralph De Lisle and his amiable friend, Paul Snowe.

"Well, what is this wonderful plot you have in your wise head now, De Lisle?" inquired the man Paul.

"A plot that, like some great medicines, must either kill or cure!" answered De Lisle; "one that makes Edith Percival mine beyond hope of redemption."

"I never knew one of your plans yet that you were not equally sure of. Take care this does not prove a will-o'-the-wisp like the rest," said the other, with a sneer.

"No, by heaven!" exclaimed De Lisle, setting his teeth fiercely; "this night Edith Percival shall be either my bride or that of death; this night the crisis of her fate and mine has come."

"Bah! bah! all foolery—all child's play!" said Paul Snowe, in his bitter, jibing tone. "You lay wonderful plans, and see them slip through your fingers when they are in your power. This girl who has made such a fool of you was for a week under the same roof with you; her lover and your mortal foe was likewise within arm's length of you. Well, you let both go—let them give you the slip and laugh at you and your plans in safety."

"For that I may thank your dainty daughter and that villainous young scoundrel, Joe Smith," said De Lisle, angrily. "I should have liked to have twisted her treacherous neck for her on my return, and would have done so but for you."

"I have no doubt of it," said Paul, deliberately filling a glass of brandy; "but you well know you are too completely in my power to play any of your tricks off on me. What would you do if I took a fancy to split some day and let all out?"

"If you would!" exclaimed De Lisle, his face growing absolutely livid with rage as he drew a pistol, "I would"—

"What?" said Paul Snowe, with his cold, deriding smile, as his leader paused.

"Shoot you like a dog!" hissed De Lisle through his clenched teeth.

"Two could play at that game, my worthy captain," said the man, carelessly, touching a long knife he wore. "If I took a fancy for peaching, there would be a slight obstacle in the way of your shooting me—something like this." And Paul made a peculiar motion under his left ear, indicative of hanging.

"Villain!" said De Lisle, "there was a time when you would not dare to be thus insolent. But boast away; I fear you not; you are too careful of your own precious jugular to risk it by such an experiment. I fancy when Ralph De Lisle swings, Paul Snowe will keep him company."

"Perhaps so. Well, it's a comfort to think the world will wag just as merrily when we are gone. There will be few tears shed over our grave—eh, captain?"

"You forget your affectionate daughter," said De Lisle, sneeringly.

"Oh, Elva? She will be better without me; but for her sake I will avoid Jack Ketch as long as possible. But to change the subject, which is getting rather personal, when you talk of hanging, how do you propose to abduct Miss Percival?"

"I shall not abduct her, my good friend; she must come with me of her own free will or not at all."

"Faith, you are getting mightily particular. I've seen the time when you

weren't so choice, and was glad to get her, by hook or by crook."

"Yes, but that time has passed, and my proud Lady Edith shall sue to me now as I have heretofore done to her. Love and hatred, worthy Paul, are nearly akin. Next to myself, I loved that girl better than anything on earth. Well, she jilted me for this dashing rebel—or patriot, I suppose I should say now, since they have triumphed — and I hate her now with an intensity far surpassing any love I ever felt for her. Now I would, as far as love is concerned, a thousand times rather marry your pretty daughter Elva than her."

"Much obliged for the honor," said Paul, dryly. "But, in the name of my 'pretty daughter Elva,' I beg respectfully to decline the illustrious alliance."

De Lisle smiled scornfully, but, without noticing his words, went on:

"Affection, therefore, you see, has nothing to do with my wish to make Edith Percival my wife. Hatred and revenge are my sole motives. She loathes the very sight of me, I know, and there is no other means by which I can punish her for it so well. Her lover, too—Master Fred—will feel it more than anything else I could possibly do. Therefore, these are my reasons for wishing to marry pretty Edith."

"Well, I didn't ask you for your reasons," said Snowe; "I don't take so much interest in either of you. You say you are going to make her marry you. Now, how are you going to do it?"

"Listen!" said his friend, with a sardonic smile. "I have learned that my quondam lady-love has taken a fancy to a sick girl in the neighborhood, and visits her very often. A brother of the invalid —a child of nine—goes for her when wanted. This little fellow I told to meet me to-night at a place I appointed, but I have not yet told him what I want. I think I can manage to induce him to bring Edith out. I will meet her—urge her to fly with me—and if she persists in refusing"—

"Well, and if she does?" said the man Paul, looking up.

"I will stab her to the heart!" exclaimed De Lisle, in a fierce, hoarse whisper, while his eyes glittered with a demoniacal light.

Paul Snowe drew back involuntarily at the strange, wild expression on his companion's face. There was a look almost of horror on his face as he exclaimed:

"No, no! devil as you are, you would not murder an unoffending girl!"

"Ha, ha! Paul Snowe turned preacher!" mocked De Lisle. "When was it your conscience became so tender, honest Paul?—since the night your Spanish knife let the moonlight through Dandy Dan's backbone for calling you a liar—eh?"

"Perdition seize you! Hush!" exclaimed Paul, growing pale. "I meant to dissuade you from it, because it will be discovered, and then we shall swing, you know."

"Well, it's swing with us, anyway, sooner or later. One may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, Paul," said De Lisle, recklessly.

"To be sure," said Paul, turning uneasily in his chair and draining another glass of brandy. "But where's the use of being so desperate? You ought to take precautions."

"So I have, my honest friend. If it does come to the worst, I think I have arranged matters in such a manner that all the blame will fall on the shoulders of that meddler, Fred Stanley."

"Ha! have you? In what way?"

"This dagger belongs to him; I saw his name engraved on it, and, thinking it might be useful to me, I took charge of it. About three hours ago I saw him parting with Major Percival, and the major foaming and scolding like an enraged washerwoman. Shortly after he mounted his horse and left the village in hot haste. Now, if the major's daughter is found mur — well, you know what I mean—in the morning, with his dagger somewhere near, that circumstance, taken in connection with his quarrel with the major and subsequent flight from the village, will, without doubt, place the worthy youth's neck in a tight place and convince the world generally, and his admirers particularly, that, after all his escapes, he was born to be hanged at last."

There was a wicked and most sinister smile on De Lisle's lips, a glittering light in his evil eyes, that involuntarily made Paul Snowe, hardened in crime though he was, draw back in horror. There was something so fearfully cold-blooded in the manner in which he unfolded his diabolical plot that his listener placed his hand on the hilt of his knife and looked for a moment into De Lisle's gleaming eyes in silence.

"Well, what do you think of it?" demanded De Lisle, at length.

"Think!" repeated Paul; "why, that if there ever was a fiend incarnate on earth, you are one!"

"Ha! ha! Well, no matter for that. Do you not think my plan a safe one?"

"I neither know nor care, Ralph De Lisle. If you are safe yourself, all right. If you are not safe, all right likewise. I will have nothing to do with your diabolical plans; therefore, as I said before, I neither know nor care whether you are safe or not."

"Insolent villain!" exclaimed De Lisle,

springing fiercely to his feet; "you shall repent this!"

"Hands off, De Lisle!" said Paul, boldly confronting him. "I am not afraid of you. Commit your own murders for the future; I will have no more to do with such a cold-blooded assassin."

For a moment De Lisle glared upon him like a wild beast; but the bold eye of Paul Snowe quailed not beneath his burning gaze. Seeing how little he was feared, De Lisle changed his tactics, and, throwing himself back in his chair, he said, with a forced laugh:

"Well, we won't quarrel, Paul; we have been friends too long to part in anger, and especially about such a trifle."

"I never was a friend of yours, Captain De Lisle," said Paul, doggedly. "Villainy bound us together; but the link of crime is very different from that of friendship."

"Well, have it your own way," said De Lisle, with affected carelessness, as he replaced the dagger within his vest. "And now I see by yonder timepiece that 'tis time I was keeping my appointment with little nine-year-old. You'll wait for me here, of course?"

"No, I won't!" was the short, sharp and decisive reply. "I have waited for you too long, as I may yet find out to my cost. You and I part to-night, De Lisle," continued Paul Snow, rising, and taking his hat. "I intend to leave the country as soon as possible; and, if you wish to avoid the hangman, you will follow my example, and let Edith Percival alone. Don't turn so white about the gills, man; I won't peach. But you know, however long the fox may run, he'll be caught by the tail at last. So, as we are parting, I'll take a last glass with you, in memory of old times. Here's wishing you long life and an escape from the halter."

"I'll drink no such toast!" said De Lisle, biting his lips to keep down his increasing anger. "Here's to the bright eyes of your daughter Elva."

"So be it, then," said Paul, refilling his glass; "and on those same bright eyes you will never look again, my susceptible friend. Good-night, De Lisle, and luck be with you."

He turned and quitted the room. De Lisle looked after him with an evil smile as he muttered:

"Say you so, worthy Paul? That remains to be seen. And now for the drama of the evening. Will it be a tragedy or a farce? Well, ere midnight I shall know."

He drank deeply, as if to nerve himself for what was approaching; and then, muffling himself in his cloak and drawing his hat down over his brow, he quitted the obscure inn, and disappeared in the gloomy night.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OLD HOUSE ON THE BLUFF.

"A willing messenger—Crime's ready tool—
A thing of flesh and blood that may be bought
And sold like vilest merchandise."

THE sky was dark and overcast with storm-threatening clouds. The moon struggled feebly on her way, shedding a sickly, watery light over the earth. The wind had been rising all the evening, and now blew chill and raw, accompanied by a thin, light drizzle. Lights were twinkling here and there through the village as De Lisle passed along; but there were few abroad—a circumstance he rejoiced at, lest he should be discovered. Those who did meet him as they hurried homeward, paused to stare in surprise at the tall, dark, muffled figure which strode along as though gifted with the famous seven-league boots.

Faster and faster he walked; for, half mad with excitement, he strove to lose memory in the rapid motion. His head, hot and throbbing, felt as though it would burst. He paused for a moment, and, leaning against a tree, took off his hat that the cool breeze might relieve him. His long, dark locks streamed wildly in the wind behind him, and his heart throbbed so loudly that every pulsation sounded like the stroke of a sledgehammer. His hands were red with blood—his soul dark with crime; but never had he meditated so dreadful a murder as weighed on his heart to-night. The shadows, as they flitted by, looked to his heated imagination like specters rising from the grave to warn him back.

The village clock struck nine. He started at the sound, and, unable to remain longer inactive, started on more rapidly than before. As he walked, he suddenly lifted his head, and beheld the churchyard before him. To reach the place where the boy was to meet him, he must pass it. The tombstones gleamed white and ghastly in the dim light. How they seemed to glare upon him with their cold, pale eyes!

He shuddered, and hurried on faster than ever. His rapid walking soon brought him to the place of rendezvous; it was an old, deserted house on the black hillside, known as the Barn on the Bluff. It had been untenanted for many a day, and was only used as a shelter for sheep on stormy nights. No other house was near it on any side. It stood alone, bleak, grim, and dismal—a fit place for the dark scene it was to witness that night.

A boy of about nine—a vacant-eyed, stupid-faced urchin—stood shivering beside one of the broken windows, and endeavoring to peer out into the gloom. Hearing approaching footsteps, he started from his corner, and met De Lisle in the doorway.

"If you'd stayed much longer, I wouldn't waited," said the boy, rather sullenly. "Why didn't you come sooner?"

"It's time enough," said De Lisle. "Do you think you'll find Miss Percival at home now?"

"Be sure I will," replied the boy. "They have a party to-night, and she'll be sure to be there."

"A party!" muttered De Lisle; "that defeats all my plans. Why didn't you tell me this before, you young rascal? She won't come with you if they have a party."

"Yes, she will, too," said the boy. "She did it afore, and she told our Harriet any time she wanted her she'd come, and no bother about it."

"Well, will you go and tell her your sister is dying, or any other lie that you think will be likely to bring her here? See, I will give you this gold guinea now, and a dozen when you come back."

"Will you, though?" exclaimed the boy, his eyes sparkling with delight.

"Yes, if you bring her here alone. Mind, don't tell her there is a man waiting for her here. You have to pass this bluff on your way home, have you not?"

"Yes; but there's another shorter way."

"Oh! well, don't mind the shorter way. Bring her here—alone, mind—alone. Do you think there is any danger of her being accompanied by any one?"

"No, I guess not; she often came with me alone to see Harriet as late as this."

"Oh! very well, then; go now and don't be long. Remember, if you bring Miss Percival here alone, you shall have my purse upon your return."

"All right," answered the boy, touching his cap, as he quitted the old house and bounded down the hill.

Folding his arms across his breast, and drawing his cloak closer around him, De Lisle leaned against the broken doorway, and strove to still the wild tumult within, and think. Think! how could he think with heart and brain burning and throbbing with such a blinding intensity of pain? His face was deadly pale, his eyes inflamed and bloodshot, his lips dry and parched. A horror, nameless and hitherto unfelt, was stealing over him. It was as if some dread calamity were hovering over his own head.

All was profoundly still. The lights in the village below were going out one by one, as the simple villagers retired to rest, little dreaming of him who leaned silent and alone in the old house with such a tumultuously throbbing heart. The wind wailed dirge-like through the trees, and at intervals the harsh, ominous croak of a raven—that evil bird of night—as it flew past, would break upon his ear, startling him like a galvanic shock.

"Would this night were over!" he muttered, taking off his hat, and shaking back his black locks. "Am I turning coward that I quake thus at every sound? Ralph De Lisle, courage, man! 'Tis but a girl more or less in the world, and there is no one to know it."

No one to know it! A stray gleam of moonlight, breaking through the clouds, fell on his face white as that of the dead, but lighted up with such intensely burning eyes. No one to know it! A still small voice deep down in his heart and silent for many a year, rang out with one word, clear and distinct. A host of memories—memories of his almost forgotten childhood—rushed back to his mind. Again he felt his mother's gentle hand straying amid his hair; her soft voice whispering, as she passed from earth: "Love and fear God, my son, and meet me in Heaven." How reproachfully her loving eyes rose before him now. Again, in fancy, he wandered hand in hand with Edith, as he had often done in childhood, or lay on the grass at her feet, while she sang for him the sweet "Evening Hymn," and he thought the sky not half so blue and beautiful as her eyes. Words he had long forgotten came again to his mind; the simple, earnest prayer he had said in his boyhood night and morning, like some wandering strain of music rose to his lips. It was the last struggle between good and evil in his heart. His better nature seemed for a moment to prevail. He turned to quit the old house when the image of Fred Stanley arose before him. The struggle was past—he stayed. His good angel covered her bright face and wept, and Ralph De Lisle was forever—lost!

CHAPTER XXVI.

CAUGHT IN THE SNARE.

"'Tis done! I saw it in my dreams—
No more with hope the future beams!
My days of happiness are few;
Chilled by Misfortune's wintry blast,
My dawn of life is overcast;
Love, hope, and joy alike adieu:
Would I could add remembrance, too!"
—Byron.

PERCIVAL HALL was all aglow with light and radiance, music and mirth, feasting and festivity. The lofty rooms were crowded with the numerous friends of the family for the last time, for Major Percival had announced his intention of departing for England in a few weeks, to reside there permanently.

Weary with dancing, Edith had quitted the ballroom and sought refuge in the conservatory. The gay sounds of music

and dancing came to her ear, softened and mellowed by the distance.

Seating herself in a shadowy corner her golden hair falling like a glory around her, she leaned her head upon her hand, while her thoughts wandered far away. She felt sad and out of spirits, and in no mood to join the gay revelers. She was about to leave her home for the shores of "Merrie England," to leave many whom she loved, and who loved her, behind her. She thought of Fred, but no longer with hope. At her father's command they parted forever. Unable longer to resist the temptation, he had sought the village and they had one interview. The major discovered it, and a few hours before, they had parted after an exceedingly stormy interview, and she had been sternly forbidden ever to see or speak to him again.

Therefore Edith sat, sad and silent, with tears slowly filling her deep-blue eyes, and falling unheeded on her white hands. Tears for him, tears for herself, and a weight heavy and oppressive on her heart.

The entrance of a servant roused her from her sad reverie. The girl paused as she approached her, and Edith looked up inquiringly:

"If you please, miss, little Eddy Dillon's out here. He says his sister Harriet sent him with a message for you."

"O dear little Harriet! I hope she is not worse. Where is he, Betty? I must see him immediately," said Edith, forgetting her own sorrows to listen to those of others.

"Down here at the hall door, miss," said Betty. And Edith flew past her and ran down to the hall door, where stood little Eddy, cap in hand.

"O Eddy! how is Harriet?" exclaimed Edith, breathlessly.

"A great deal better—I mean worse, Miss Edith," said Eddy; "don't expect she'll live till to-morrow, nohow."

"Is it possible? Poor little Harriet! O Eddy! why didn't you come for me before?" said Edith.

"'Cause I was busy," said Eddy, scratching his head, as he composedly uttered the lie. "But she wants to see you now, if you're agreeable."

"Certainly, I'll go. Betty, bring me my hood and mantle," said Edith, promptly.

"O Miss Edith! I wouldn't go to-night, if I was you. It's going to rain I'm afraid, and the company"—

"Betty, you mustn't talk so. Do you think any such selfish consideration would make me refuse that dear child's dying request? Bring me my hood and cloak immediately."

Betty disappeared to obey her; and turning to Eddy, Edith began inquiring so eagerly about this sudden dangerous turn in his sister's illness that the good youth, not having a stock of lies manufactured for the occasion, got quite bewildered. Betty's reappearance with the desired articles relieved him from his dilemma, as she threw the cloak over Edith's shoulders and tied on her hood.

"Hadn't you better let me or one of the others go with you?" said Betty. "It's powerful lonesome going along alone."

"Oh! no, thank you; I'll do very well. Eddy and I have often gone alone on the same errand, to see poor Harriet."

"What shall I say, if any one asks for you, miss?" called Betty after her.

"You may tell mamma where I have gone; and if any one else asks you, refer them to her. Come, Eddy, I am all ready."

They went down the steps together, and started at a rapid walk. The clouds were slowly breaking away, and the moon rode in silvery radiance through the star-studded dome. The cool night breeze brought a bright flush to Edith's pale cheek, and a clearer light to her blue eyes, as she tripped lightly along, thinking of "dear little Harriet," and almost envying her for being freed from earth so soon. Master Eddy, too, was thinking—a very unusual thing for him, by the way—and which never occurred, save on an unusual occurrence like the present. He was wondering what the tall, dark man could want with her, and whether he had acted quite right in deceiving her as he had done. Unable to solve this knotty problem, he placed his hand in his pocket where it encountered and closed upon a guinea, which, in a wonderfully short space of time, removed all his scruples, just as it would those of an older person. The recollection of the twelve he was to get on his return, clinched the argument, and Master Eddy lifted his head and walked along in the proud consciousness of having discharged his duty as a man and a Christian should. Having heard the villagers talk over the story of Miss Edith's rebel lover, he concluded this must be he come to hold a clandestine interview with her.

"Why are you taking this roundabout way?" asked Edith, as her companion turned in the direction of the bluff. "The other path is much shorter."

"Yes, I know it; but the other road's muddy; 'taint so good as this," said Eddy, rather at a loss for a suitable lie. "This ain't much longer, either."

"Oh, very well!" said Edith; "only hurry, I am so anxious to see Harriet."

Both walked on rapidly, and in silence, until they reached the dark bluff.

"Where are you going?" asked Edith, as Eddy began to descend.

"I left something up in the old barn, I must go after. Come with me; I don't like to go alone."

Unconscious and unsuspecting, Edith

followed him up the steep hillside. The bright moonlight shone full upon the deserted barn, and showed it in all its dreary loneliness.

"What a dismal place!" thought Edith; "it looks wilder and drearier to-night than I ever remember to have seen it before. How ghastly those moldering walls look in the cold moonlight!"

Within the shadow of those walls, how little did she dream that he whom she dreaded most on earth stood watching her. Rapidly she followed her young guide, whose steps were quickened by the recollection of the reward promised on his return.

A tall, dark figure, muffled in a cloak, stepped from within the shadow of the doorway, and approached them. Something in his height and air reminded her of Fred, and, filled with the idea that he had again sought her to bid a final adieu, she sprang forward, exclaiming breathlessly:

"Fred! Fred! can this be you?"

He raised his hand, and, pointing to the lad, made a motion for her to be silent. Then, slipping the promised reward into his hand, he whispered sternly:

"Go!"

"O Fred! this is very rash!" said Edith, as the boy bounded down the hillside and disappeared. "What would papa say if he knew of this?"

"Hist!" said De Lisle, disguising his voice in a hurried whisper; "come in here!"

He drew her arm within his; and, half-bewildered by this sudden meeting, she scarcely realized his meaning until she stood with him in the old deserted house. He released her arm, and stood between her and the door, his hat still hiding his face, so tall, so still, so motionless, that he looked like some dark statue.

"Fred, is this you?" said Edith, a wild thrill of fear shooting through her heart at his strange silence. The long cloak that muffled him fell off, he slowly raised his hat, and she beheld the pale, fierce face and intensely burning eyes of her dreaded foe, Ralph De Lisle.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CATASTROPHE.

"Murder most foul—as in the best it is—
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural."

—Shakespeare.

STUNNED, bewildered, giddy, the wild shriek of mortal fear that quivered on the lips of Edith died away, as she met those fierce, dark eyes she dreaded most on earth, fixed upon her with such a fiery, serpent-like gaze.

She grew dizzy, and gasped for breath; for there was a look more of a demon than of a man on the face before her. Alone with him in that deserted house, too far from the village for her cries to reach human ears—nothing but Heaven could save her now. All the dangers of her appalling situation burst upon her at once. A dimness stole over her eyes—the sound of many waters was in her ears—her heart throbbed like the muffled beating of a drum, and she would have fallen had she not grasped the wall for support.

"I see you have not forgotten me, Edith," were his first words, spoken with cold, bitter sarcasm. "When last we parted you had decidedly the advantage of me; now the tables have turned, and Edith Percival is again in my power!"

She strove to speak; but, though her lips moved she could not articulate a word.

"You mistook me for Fred," he went on, in the same mocking tone; "'tis a wondrous pity you were disappointed. You never need call on him again. This night is the crisis of both our lives. For what purpose, do you think, I have had you brought here?"

"I know not," said Edith, speaking in a voice yet faint with terror.

"Listen, then: this night you must either consent to be my bride, or you will never live to see the sun rise again!"

His face wore the look of a fiend—his glittering eyes were fixed on her face; his voice sounded low, hoarse and unnatural in that dreary room.

Her lips parted—her eyes dilated with horror; her face was deadly white, but no cry escaped her. Her very heart seemed for a moment to stand still at his appalling words, and then—the courage that had never been hers before was granted her in that dreadful moment. In her awful peril, fear and horror alike passed away, and a feeling of intense loathing and lofty scorn for him who stood before her took their place. Drawing herself up to her full height she shook back her golden hair, and fixing her large blue eyes full on his face she said, in a voice whose very calmness startled even herself:

"My life you may take, for it is in your power; but I would die a thousand deaths sooner than be bride or aught of thine!"

Her fearless words and undaunted manner were so unexpected that he started back a pace, and stood regarding her in silent wonder. It was but for a moment, and the fiend within his heart was aroused into fury tenfold greater than before.

"And you dare defy me thus!" he said, setting his teeth hard together. "Beware! your life hangs but by a thread."

"I know it; but death is preferable

to being the wife of a demon incarnate, such as you!"

His face grew livid with diabolical passion, and he grasped her by the arm so fiercely that she could scarcely repress a cry of pain.

"Consent to be my wife, or by all the fiends in flames, this shall enter your heart!" he hissed, as he brandished the gleaming dagger before her eyes.

"O Ralph De Lisle! lay not the weight of this dreadful crime on your soul, I conjure you!" exclaimed Edith, laying her small white hand on his arm, and looking up in his face with her earnest eyes; "by the memory of the past, when you were young and guiltless, I implore you to spare my life! Think of the remorse you will endure for this awful crime in days to come! O Ralph! Ralph! by the love you bore me once, commit not the fearful sin! Think of the eternal woe pronounced against the murderer hereafter, and have mercy upon yourself!"

The thrilling, the intense solemnity of her tone awed even his heart of stone. Like some wandering strain of music it broke upon his ear, and for a moment he paused, appalled at the magnitude of the crime he was about to commit. But his evil mentor whispered in his ear: "It is too late to retreat"—and the chord she had touched no longer vibrated.

"You prate in vain!" he exclaimed; "once again, I ask you, will you be my wife?"

"Never—never!"

He paused, as if to work his feelings up to the most intense pitch of maddening excitement. His whole frame quivered and his ghastly face was convulsed by rage.

"For the last time I ask you, Edith Percival," he said, in a voice hoarse and choked, "will you marry me, or die!"

"I will die!"

Her words fell clear and distinct in the deep silence of the lonely night. Foaming with rage, he drew the slender, glittering knife and plunged it up to the hilt in her side!

The hot blood spurted up in his face. With one wild cry of mortal agony she fell to the ground.

De Lisle stood above her, ghastly and paralyzed by the awful deed. With one last effort she rose on her elbow, fixed her dying eyes on his face and drew out the dagger. A torrent of blood flowed over her snowy hands and dyed with crimson the floor around. Her white lips parted, but no sound came forth—her eyes grew glazed and sightless, and she fell back, stiff, and cold, and lifeless.

And there, in the light of the solemn stars, in the lonely silence of the night, the fearful tragedy had been enacted. The cold glare of the moonlight, streaming through the broken casement, fell softly and pityingly on the still form that lay on the ground. The golden hair fell over her face, but the wild, despairing eyes seemed still fixed on the face of her murderer, as he stood, like one turned to stone, above her. Her white festal garments were red with blood, and one little hand still held the dagger, dyed with the same dreadful hue.

De Lisle stood rooted to the ground, feeling as though he neither lived nor breathed. Everything danced red and fiery before his eyes—his brain and heart seemed rending in twain. Heaven of heavens! how those dying, despairing eyes seemed glaring upon him!

Maddened, frenzied, crazed, he turned to rush from the building. His foot struck against something, and he stumbled. He glanced down, and saw it was the fatal dagger. With a fearful oath he hurled it from him over the craggy bluff and fled out into the open air.

He paused for a moment and pressed his hands heavily to his burning temples, that throbbed madly beneath his fingers. His eyes were like burning coals—his lips were hot and parched, and his hands trembled as though he were stricken with the palsy. The night-wind seemed to shriek in his ear, "Murderer." Ringing—ringing through heart and brain was the last dying cry, until he stopped his ears in agonized horror.

What should he do? Whither should he go? His first impulse was to rush from that dreadful spot, and fly—fly far from the world, far from his yellow men, and far from himself. One other idea filled his mind: it was to destroy the evidence of his crime—to burn the old house, and what it contained. He could not endure to see it standing there, so dark and ghastly, seeming to mock him in his agony of remorse. There was a pile of loose brushwood near. He set it on fire, and paused to gaze, as

——"fierce and high
The death-pile blazed unto the sky."

How red and angry the flames looked! Were they, too, tinged with blood?

He knew the place would soon be surrounded, and he dared not pause to see his dreadful work accomplished. Like one pursued by a demon, he fled, and paused not until he had gained the village. There was no one astir; all were buried in peaceful repose, unconscious of the awful crime that had just been committed. How the murderer envied them as he flew past.

He paused not until he had gained his own room, and locked himself in. A flask of brandy stood on the table. Glass after glass of the fiery liquid he drained to drown recollection; but all in vain—

all in vain! Those dying eyes—that despairing cry—that last imploring gaze, were before him still; and he paced up and down the room like a maniac, not daring to pause one moment in his rapid walk.

"Fire! Fire!"

The cry rang through the streets, and roused him into action. All was bustle and confusion. Men were rushing through the streets toward the scene of the tragedy. He could not endure this dreadful inaction longer. Opening the door he left the inn, and mingling with the crowd, rushed toward the burning house.

Amid all that crowd no one strove so zealously to extinguish the flames as he. In the wild excitement there was no time to think, and he worked as though his very life depended on it. All their efforts were, however, vain—higher and higher rose the flames, rearing their heads, red and fiery, unto heaven, until De Lisle almost fancied they were crying for vengeance on him.

Suddenly a bright sheet of flame shot into the cloudless sky—the next moment there was a loud crash, as the whole building fell, a mass of red, fiery ruins to the ground.

De Lisle felt as though the sight was leaving his eyes, as he witnessed that last act in the fearful tragedy of the night. The people, wondering how the fire could have originated, were hurrying to their homes. He dared not venture to go with them; for, in his excitement, he fancied every one could read "murderer" in his face. He turned, and plunged into the dark pine woods, scarcely knowing whither he went, only striving to escape from himself and his haunting remorse. He could hear that cry as the wind wailed like a lost spirit through the trees—he could see those imploring eyes still before him, wherever he went. He put his hand over his eyes to shut them out, but all in vain—they were still before him; so mournful, so beseeching, so sadly reproachful.

"O, that this night were over!" he said, wiping the perspiration from his heated brow. "What have I done that I should be tortured thus? O for the waters of Lethe to drown maddening memory! Shall I never again know peace? Shall I never escape from myself?"

Through the dim, solemn woods he paced until morning. The red sunlight gilded with golden glory the green treetops, and the murderer shrank from its bright, keen gaze like the guilty thing that he was. He hurried to his rooms, drained glass after glass of brandy, and then flung himself on his bed, to lose, in feverish sleep, the recollection of what he had done.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

NEXT MORNING.

"And over all there hung a baleful gloom—
The step stole fearful through each shadowy room.
Dark, sumptuous, solemn as some Eastern pile
Where mutes keep watch—a home without a smile."

—Bulwer.

The red light of coming morn dispersed the revelers from Percival Hall. One by one they departed until where lately all was music and mirth, profound silence reigned.

And father and mother, brother and sister, all slept, little dreaming of the fate of her they loved. During the night, when the gay hours flitted by on "rosy wings," no presentiment of what was passing in the lonely house on the bluff arose before them to mar their festivity. And now, all unconscious of her absence or her dreadful fate, they slept peacefully.

"Where is Edith?" asked Major Percival, as the family assembled a few hours after around the breakfast-table.

"Don't know, I'm sure," replied Nell, to whom the question was addressed; "I haven't seen her since early last night."

"She was not among the dancers during the morning," remarked Gus; "I missed her, and heard several wondering at her absence."

"Strange," said the major, frowning slightly. "What must our guests have thought? Edith has acted very strangely of late."

"Perhaps she is ill," said Mrs. Percival, anxiously. "Tell one of the servants, Ellen, to go up to her room and see."

"I'll go myself," said Nell, rising, and hurriedly leaving the room.

In a few moments she reappeared, and with a look of alarm, announced that Edith was not in her room, and that her bed had not been slept in at all that night.

"Where can she be?" said Mrs. Percival, now thoroughly alarmed. "Good heaven! something must have happened."

"Ring the bell and see if any of the servants know," said the major, more angry than frightened.

Nell obeyed, and in a moment Betty made her appearance.

"Have you seen Miss Edith this morning?" demanded her master, as she entered.

"This morning? No, sir."

"Do you know where she is?" said the major, for the first time beginning to feel slightly alarmed.

"Yes, sir; little Eddy Dillon came here for her last night, saying his sister Har-

riet was dying, and wished to see her. She went with him and bade me tell you, ma'am, but I found no chance."

"Oh, then, she's safe enough, I suppose," said the major, while Mrs. Percival drew a long breath, as though relieved.

At this moment, Nugent sauntered carelessly in.

"Well, good folks, have you heard the news?" he asked, throwing himself indolently on a lounge.

"No—what news?" said Nell.

"Why, the old barn on the bluff was burned down last night," said Nugent.

"Burned down! it must have been the work of an incendiary, then," said his father.

"Doubtless it was, though I cannot see what could have been the object for which it was done," replied his son.

"Some mischievously-inclined person, who wished to rouse the villagers," suggested Gus.

"Very likely; 'twas fit for nothing but a bonfire. Where's Edith?"

"At the Widow Dillon's."

"The Widow Dillon's! Why, she hasn't been there since yesterday morning."

"What!"

"She has not been there since yesterday morning," said Nugent, decidedly; "I was going past there about an hour ago, and Mrs. Dillon called me in to see her little girl. Harriet begged me to tell Edith to come to her immediately, and Mrs. Dillon said she had been longing for her since she had been there yesterday morning."

"What can be the meaning of all this?" said the major, rising hurriedly, while Mrs. Percival grew pale with terror. "Her son came here for Edith last night, and they both departed together."

"She must have left him then, sir," said Nugent, "for she certainly did not accompany him home. He was in the cottage while I was there, and made no mention of her having started with him; neither did the widow allude to her having sent for Edith at all. And now I recollect, she said she would have sent for her last night, but on account of the ball, she thought she would not trouble her."

"O Major Percival! something dreadful has happened," said Mrs. Percival, rising in great agitation; "I feel it! I know it! She has been carried off again, and we shall never see her more!"

"Nonsense, Mrs. Percival! She is doubtless somewhere in the village," said the major, concealing his own alarm. "I will go in search of her."

"Let me accompany you," said Nugent, springing up; for the many dangers Edith had recently escaped made them doubly anxious.

Both quitted the house together, and walked rapidly in the direction of the village.

"I fear there may be danger, father," said Nugent, uneasily; "the whole affair seems rather mysterious."

"Heaven forbid!" said his father, hurriedly; "but we must see this boy with whom she departed, and learn what has happened from him."

They walked on in silence until they reached the widow's humble cottage. Mrs. Dillon met them in the doorway, looking alarmed and excited.

"O Major Percival! I'm so glad to see you! Just look here," and the widow displayed a purse filled with bright gold guineas.

"Why, Mrs. Dillon, what piece of good fortune is this you have met with? You haven't robbed a bank, I hope," said young Percival.

"No, indeed, Mr. Nugent," said the widow, anxiously, "'twas he brought this home." And she pointed to where sat her hopeful son; and he, with his finger in his mouth, was looking doggedly on the ground.

"Eddy; why, man alive, where did you get all this money?" said Nugent, giving him a shake. "Look up, sir. Have you turned highwayman?"

The boy sat in sulky silence.

"I'm terribly afeared he stole it," said the widow, in evident distress; "he won't tell where he got it, and I know he never came honestly by it."

"This is serious," said the major, "and must be seen to. See here, my fine fellow," he said, sternly, "where did you get this money? Have you stolen it?"

"No, I didn't steal it," said the boy, sullenly.

"Where did you get it, then? Answer me, or I'll have you committed to prison," said the major, with increasing sternness, in order to intimidate him.

Eddy looked up, and seeing the inflexible look on the face bending over him, burst into tears.

"Come, my little man, don't cry," said Nugent, patting him on the head; "tell the truth, and nothing shall be done to you. Where did you get it?"

"The man gave it to me," sobbed Eddy.

"What man?" inquired Percival.

"The man who told me to bring Miss Edith to the bluff, last night."

"What!" exclaimed the major, catching him so fiercely by the arm that the boy uttered a cry of pain.

"Father, be calm," said Nugent, though his own face grew deadly pale, "we must hear all the particulars, and if you frighten him so he will not speak. Begin now at the first, Eddy. Who was this man?"

"I don't know—he didn't tell me his name," replied Eddy.

"Can you describe him? What did he look like?"

"He was tall and dark, with black hair and whiskers, and wore a long, black cloak. I couldn't see his face, 'cause his hat was pulled away down."

"When did you meet him first?"

"Yes'day evening. He asked me if Miss Edith didn't visit Harriet, an' I said yes; and then told me to meet him on the bluff at nine o'clock, and that he would pay me well."

"Did you go?" asked Nugent, growing more and more excited.

"Yes, I went and waited for him in the old barn. He came and told me to go up to the hall, and say Harriet wanted Miss Edith—and then bring her to him and he'd pay me—I"—

The boy paused, and glanced in terror at the agitated face of the major.

"Go on," said Nugent, hoarsely.

"I'm afraid," said the boy, again beginning to cry.

"Go on, go on, go on!" said the young man, impatiently; "no one shall touch you. Did you obey?"

"Yes. I went up to the hall and Miss Edith came with me. She ran forward when she saw the man, and called him Fred, and he gave me this money and told me to go, and as I ran down the hill I heard her say: 'O Fred, this is very rash!' and then she went with him into the old house."

Father and son gazed into each other's faces, pale with undefined terror.

"Well, what else?" said Nugent, almost giddy with a strange apprehension.

"Then I come home," went on the boy, reluctantly; "but I wanted to hear who he was, and what he was going to do. So I came back and stood where I could see them without they seeing me. I couldn't see his face, 'cause he had his back turned, but I could hear them talking. He asked her to go with him and marry him, or something, and she said she wouldn't, and then"—

Again the boy paused, and covered his face with a shudder.

"Well, and then," said Nugent, in a voice that sounded husky and unnatural.

"He got awfully angry, and took out a long knife; and I got frightened and ran away," said the boy, trembling at the recollection.

Nugent paused for a moment to master the emotions that threatened to unman him. Then with an effort at calmness he said:

"And what followed next?"

"I went home and went into bed," continued Eddy, "until I heard them singing out 'fire,' and then I got up and went to the bluff, and the barn was burning. I saw the man in the crowd, but I was afraid to speak to him, he seemed so wild-like. When the barn was all burned down the people went away and I saw him go off into the woods and that's all I know."

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed Nugent, reeling back, as though stunned by a heavy blow, "Edith is murdered!"

"And Fred Stanley is her murderer," said the major, in a voice so deep and unearthly that it seemed to issue from the jaws of death.

"It cannot be! it cannot be! it is monstrous! impossible! absurd!" exclaimed Nugent, in wild excitement. "Fred Stanley could never be an assassin!"

"I tell you he has murdered her," said his father, in a tone of concentrated fierceness; "and by the heaven above us, his life shall pay for hers. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life!" he cried, rushing madly from the house.

Nugent followed; and feeling the necessity for calmness and firmness in the dreadful crisis, he laid his hand on his arm and arrested his flying steps.

"Father, father! be calm! be calm for heaven's sake! Think of my mother, if she sees you thus, and hears this news; the shock will kill her. For her sake compose yourself and be calm."

"Calm, sir! dare you talk of calmness when my daughter has been foully assassinated? O Edith! my child! my child! I will not think of mourning for thee until I have had vengeance on thy murderer!"

"Father, it is impossible that Fred Stanley has been guilty of this dreadful deed. I will never believe it!" cried Percival, excitedly. "A nobler heart never beat within the breast of man than his."

"Who else is there to have done such an act?" said the major passionately. "Did we not part in anger a few hours before? I tell you there was murder in his flashing eyes as I watched him ride away. You heard how it occurred. He urged her to fly with him. She, dreading my anger, refused, and no doubt, maddened by her resistance, he slew her on the spot. O my daughter! my daughter! why was I not near to save you from so dreadful a fate?"

He wrung his hands and groaned aloud in bitter anguish.

"But the villain shall meet his doom," he again exclaimed, with the old fierceness flashing in his eyes; "this very day shall he be arrested!"

They walked on in silence until they reached the foot of the bluff.

"Let us visit the scene of the tragedy," said Nugent, as they paused for a moment to contemplate the heap of black, smoking ruins.

They turned to ascend. Scarcely had they gone a dozen steps, when the major's eye fell on something bright gleaming among the rocks. He stooped to

pick it up, and started back with a cry of horror.

It was the fatal dagger, red with the dried blood. As he turned it over, his eye fell on the name engraven on the handle—"Frederick Stanley."

"Just heaven! how wonderful is thy retribution!" he exclaimed, as he handed the knife to his son. "With this fatal blade the deed was done, and the murderer's name is on it. In the excitement of the moment he has cast it away and forgotten it."

Pale with horror, Nugent examined it. He had often seen the dagger with Fred; it had been given him by his father in his boyhood and was prized as his gift. To doubt his guilt longer seemed out of the question, and yet how could he believe him guilty? Fred Stanley, so brave, so generous, so noble-hearted, guilty of so dreadful a crime! Oh, never, never! The thought was too unnatural to be entertained.

They stood at length gazing with feelings impossible to describe on the smoldering remains of the fire. There Edith had been slain and her body had perished amid the flames.

It was with very different feelings they stood gazing upon the charred and smoking ruins. In Major Percival's breast, above every other feeling, was the fierce, burning desire for vengeance. He could scarcely think of sorrow, so intense was his desire for revenge; it seemed an injustice to her memory to allow her murderer one moment longer to burden the earth. Hanging seemed a thousand times too good for him, and he would have given worlds to see him broken on the wheel, tortured on the rack, or roasted at a slow fire for the crime he had committed.

In Nugent's heart, horror for his sister's dreadful fate, a feeling of remorse that he had not been near to save her, were mingled with agonizing doubts, whether or not to believe Fred Stanley guilty. One moment he almost hated himself for believing him capable of such an action; and then the startling train of circumstantial evidence would arise before him, until there seemed no longer room for the shadow of a doubt. Amid all this war of conflicting emotions, neither of them suspected Ralph De Lisle, whom they imagined far away.

"Ha! what have we here?" exclaimed Nugent, suddenly, as a portion of a blue scarf caught his eye, lying under a charred and broken stick. He picked it up. Both recognized it as one Edith had worn that fatal night. It was of rich blue silk, embroidered with silver fringe, and now more than half burned. It was spotted with blood and near the end was a hole, exactly such as would be made by the dagger.

"It is but another proof of his guilt," said the major, in a low, thick voice. "O Edith! Edith! but there is no time for mourning! When justice is satisfied there will be time enough for tears."

His eyes were burning and tearless, his face was deadly pale, and there was a look of fierce determination in his face.

As they reentered the village they were met by the bustling little landlord of the inn.

"Ah! good morning, Major Percival! good morning, Mr. Nugent! fine day this; been up to the fire, I s'pose; queer thing that, queer thing. S'pose you haven't seen anything of a tall fellow in a black cloak, and hat over his face, hey?"

"What of him?" said Nugent, with breathless interest.

"Oh, nothing! nothing! only he came here late last night, and ordered a room; then went out and didn't come in till after midnight. Two or three minutes after he was off to the fire, and since that nobody's seen him. Funny chap! went off without paying the reckoning, and drank more brandy than I like to think of. Good morning!" And the landlord bustled away.

Major Percival hurried to the nearest magistrate to make a deposition of the case, and obtain a warrant for the arrest of Fred Stanley. Nugent, finding the task of announcing the dreadful news devolved upon him, hastened home—stunned and bewildered, like one who walks in a dream.

Gently as he broke the news to them, the effect was terrible. Mrs. Percival fell into violent convulsions, and was carried to her room. Nell grew deadly white, and such a feeling of sickness came over her that for a moment she was on the verge of fainting. But when she heard Fred accused as the murderer, indignation restored her to herself, and she exclaimed, vehemently:

"I'll never believe it—never, never! I would as soon credit it, Nugent, if they said you did it yourself. Oh, how dreadful! how dreadful!—to think we were all here, dancing and enjoying ourselves, and Edith lying cold and dead without one friend near to aid her! O Edith, Edith, Edith! my dearly beloved sister!"

She covered her face with her hands, and wept so hysterically that both Nugent and Gus were alarmed. The latter endeavored to console her, but she pushed him away, saying:

"No, no! let me alone! Oh, Edith, Edith! my murdered sister!"

And all through that day she wandered about the gloomy house, wringing her hands and repeating that dear name—her pale face, disheveled hair and disordered dress giving her the look of one insane. It was a silent and gloomy mansion, indeed. The servants, pale with horror, stole about as noiselessly as

ghosts through the house, still as the grave, save when a wild shriek from the darkened room of Mrs. Percival would reach their ears. And Nell wandered vacantly about, twisting her pale fingers and repeating, "Edith! Edith!"—seeing but one object, the murdered form of her sister.

Through the village the news had spread like wildfire. Men were gathered in groups at every corner, talking over the tragic occurrence; women forgot their household affairs to speak of the goodness of the murdered girl and weep over her untimely fate—for Edith was universally beloved. People spoke of it in low whispers, for the whole affair seemed wrapped in mystery. Never had such a thing been heard of before in that quiet little village, and they almost held their breath, as they wondered whose turn it would be next.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ARREST.

"And yet he seems not overcome,
Although as yet his voice be dumb."

In the little parlor of the "Bottle and Bowl" was Fred Stanley. He lay stretched at full length on a lounge, leisurely smoking and listening to the merry, ringing voice of Mrs. Rosie Wilde, as she alternately scolded the servants, laughed with the neighbors and talked to the baby. And while he indolently watched the blue smoke wreathing upward, Fred was thinking.

He thought of Edith, and wondered if he should ever see her dear face again; of her stern father and his invincible antipathy to himself; of his hated rival, Ralph De Lisle; of his father, who was on the eve of departure for England, and whom he had never seen since the night he liberated him; of the mysterious hermit, and wondered what new danger was destined to bring them face to face, and lastly, of himself, as yet undecided what to do or whither to go.

The quick tramp of horse's feet dashing down the street arrested his attention. The horseman drew up and alighted at the inn door. Fred fancied his form was familiar, but he stood undecided until he heard the newcomer pronounce his name in quick, hurried tones. The next moment the door was thrown violently open, and Gus Elliott, pale, haggard, dusty and travel-worn burst into the room.

"Gus, my dear fellow, is it possible?" exclaimed Fred, springing up and grasping his hand. "But," he added, seeing his despairing face, "what in the world has happened?"

Gus fixed his eyes on his face. He could read nothing there but frank astonishment. Would a guilty man act and look thus? His doubts, if he entertained any, vanished in a moment, and, wringing the hand his friend extended, he exclaimed:

"Oh, Fred! then you have not heard? How can I tell you the dreadful story?"

"What dreadful story? My dear Gus, sit down and compose yourself. You look as though you were insane."

"Do I? I may well look insane. You, too, will look insane, when you have heard my story."

"Then let me hear it."

"Oh, Fred! my business here is very painful—painful in the extreme!"

"Then, my dear Gus, let me advise you to get it over as soon as possible. The longer you hesitate the worse it will be," said Fred, resuming his seat on the lounge.

"Have you no idea what my errand is? I come from Percival Hall.'

"Well?" said Fred, inquiringly.

Gus paced silently up and down.

"Does it concern Edith?" inquired Fred, for the first time beginning to feel alarmed.

"It does."

"What has happened? Good heaven! Gus, has De Lisle carried her off again?"

"No, no! worse still!" groaned Gus.

"What mean you?" cried Fred, springing up, white with apprehension. "Is she—is she"—

"Dead!" said Gus, solemnly.

There was a long pause. Gus turned to the window, to hide his agitation. He did not venture to look at his friend, whose deep, labored breathing sounded unnaturally loud in the silence of the room.

"Where—how—when did she die?" he asked, at length, in a voice so altered that Gus started back in terror.

"Fred, my dear friend, prepare yourself for the worst!" he said, scarcely daring to tell all.

"The worst has passed; Edith is dead! Nothing you can say now will affect me," he answered, with such unnatural calmness that Fred almost feared the blow had unsettled his reason.

"Then, Fred, she was—murdered!"

Another long pause followed. Fred's face had grown so sternly rigid that it looked as though turned to marble.

"By whom?" he asked.

"That is unknown," replied Gus, who shrank with cowardly fear from telling him all.

"When was she—when did this happen?" said Fred, whose lips seemed unable to frame the word.

"The night before last. The news has spread like wildfire, and I had hoped that you had heard it ere this and so spared me the pains of being the first to announce it."

"Where is Ralph De Lisle?" said Fred,

in a tone that plainly indicated he had little doubt who was the murderer.

"I know not. Most probably on his way to England or in the far Southwest. No one suspects him of being the murderer."

"Who, then, can it be? How could one so sweet, so gentle, have enemies? Was she robbed as well as murdered?"

"Her body was not found," said Gus, who uttered each word as slowly and reluctantly as though it burned his lips. "You recollect, perhaps, the old barn on the bluff?"

"Yes."

"She was decoyed there and slain. The barn was afterward set on fire, and her remains were consumed in the flames."

Something like a groan escaped the lips of Fred. Sinking into a seat, he shaded his face with his hands, and for several moments sat silent and motionless. Then, without raising his head or looking up, he said, huskily:

"Tell me the particulars. I would know all."

Sadly and reluctantly Gus complied.

Fred sat with his hand still shading his face—his long, dark locks falling heavily over his temples—so cold and still that he seemed to be slowly petrifying. Gus related all save who was the suspected murderer—his lips refused to reveal that.

"You see the affair is wrapped in complete mystery," he concluded. "But no doubt the murderer will yet be found. No exertion will be spared to ferret him out. The arm of divine Providence is long enough to reach him, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth."

Fred did not speak or move. The suddenness of the shock seemed to have completely stunned him.

"My dear friend," said Gus, going over and laying his hand on Fred's shoulder, "bear up! It is a heavy blow, and I can sympathize with you; but never despair! We all knew and loved Edith—we all feel her loss; but still, despair is useless. Bear up, Fred, and be a man! I have seen you before now face death at the cannon's mouth without wincing, and will you now sink under affliction like a timid girl?"

Fred looked up and disclosed a face so pale and eyes so despairing that Gus felt his words were worse than useless.

He went and took a seat by the window and gazed out. Fred, his face hidden by his hand and his black locks, sat silent and motionless. And so an hour passed before either moved or spoke.

The sound of a carriage stopping before the door at length startled Gus. He looked up eagerly, and grew a shade paler, as he heard a quick, authoritative voice inquire for "Mr. Frederick Stanley."

"Step in the parlor, sir, if you please. He's there with another gentleman," said the cheery voice of Rosie Wilde.

The door was pushed open, and stern and excited, the sheriff of the county, followed by a constable, stood before them.

"Mr. Stanley, I believe," said the sheriff, bowing to Fred, who lifted his head and answered briefly in the affirmative.

"Then, sir, I arrest you in the name of the law," said the sheriff, letting his hand fall on the young man's shoulder.

"Arrest me!" exclaimed Fred, springing to his feet and fiercely shaking off the officer's hand, as though stung by a viper.

"Such is my painful duty, sir."

"In the name of Heaven, sir, upon what charge?" impetuously exclaimed Fred, now thoroughly aroused into action.

"You are arrested upon the charge of having murdered Edith Percival."

Fred reeled as though suddenly struck, and was forced to grasp the table for support. For a moment everything seemed swimming around him; then, conscious that the cold, keen eyes of the official were fixed upon him, he recovered his usual stately firmness, and answered, with cold self-possession.

"I am ready to attend you, sir. Gus, farewell! Do you believe this charge?"

"Heaven forbid, Fred!" said Gus, in a choking voice.

"You knew, when you came, I was suspected—did you not?"

"Yes; but it was so monstrous, so absurd, I could not tell you."

"It would have been better if you had; but it matters not now. The world, no doubt, believes me guilty; but what care I for the world now? Sir, I am quite ready."

The sheriff bowed, and in his charge Fred quitted the room. Bidding adieu to Mrs. Wilde, whose lamentations were loud and heartfelt, he entered the carriage, which was driven immediately toward the county jail.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE TRIAL.

"And he for her had also wept;
But for the eyes that on him gazed,
His sorrow, if he felt it, slept;
Stern and erect his brow was raised:
Whate'er the grief his soul avowed,
He would not shrink before the crowd."

A FORTNIGHT had passed away since the arrest of Fred Stanley. The court would sit in another week, and his trial was among the first in the session.

In his cell the prisoner sat alone. His face was pale but firm, sad and composed. His long-neglected locks fell darkly over his lofty brow, as he sat watching a fading sunbeam that stole through the dusty, grated window. He heard the key turn in the lock; the next

moment the door opened and Gus entered.

Fred arose and extended his hand, saying, with a sad smile:

"This is indeed kind, Gus! All the rest of the world seems to have deserted me but you."

"They believe you guilty, Fred—I do not. I would have visited you before, but circumstances would not permit. When does your trial come on?"

"To-morrow week."

"You have engaged counsel?"

"Yes—Mr. Joice, one of the best lawyers in the State."

"That's well. Oh, there's no fear of your acquittal, Fred. It seems incredible to me how you could ever have been suspected."

"You forget the circumstantial evidence."

"Nothing but circumstantial evidence, nevertheless, my dear friend."

"True; but much slighter has been found sufficient to condemn a man before now."

"But it will not in your case. I feel sure of it! It is impossible, Fred, that you can be convicted!" exclaimed Gus, impetuously rising and pacing the cell.

"Well, never mind that now. What's the news from the outer world? What does public opinion say of me?"

"Public opinion's a—fool!"

"In many cases it is, no doubt; but what does it say of me?"

"It says you're—guilty."

"I thought so," said Fred, quietly. "This charitable world is always inclined to look on the worst possible side of things. No doubt there will be an immense crowd at the trial."

"Oh, of course! you never saw such excitement. Your family and the Percivals are so highly connected nothing else is talked of. People are looking forward to the trial with an eagerness and anxiety you can have no idea of. They are crazy to get a sight of you, too, and you may expect to endure a pretty prolonged stare from a couple of thousand eyes on that day. This exaggerated anxiety would be ludicrous were it not so annoying," said Gus, biting his lip.

"Where are the Percivals now?" inquired Fred, after a pause.

"The major and Nugent are in town here; Mrs. Percival, whose life is despaired of, is at home; and poor Nell, half insane with grief, is with her."

"Is my father here yet?"

"Yes; I saw him yesterday, looking as though fifty years had lately been added to his age; but as proud and haughty as ever. 'Tis said he will wait until after your trial, and then leave for England."

"I suppose he imagines me guilty, like the rest?"

"No doubt; but when your trial is over, and your innocence clearly proved, perhaps they will change their tune."

"It matters little," said Fred, "even though I am acquitted public opinion will still believe me guilty, and I will be just as much a murderer in the eyes of the world as though I had been condemned. But what do I care for the opinion of the world?" he added, drawing himself proudly up, while some of the old haughtiness flashed in his eyes and curled his lip. "I live in a world of my own, as high above theirs as heaven is above the earth. But you, dear Gus—I should be sorry to lose your faith in my integrity. How will you be able to maintain your belief in my innocence, against such an overwhelming mass of testimony as will be brought against me?"

"Though all the world should believe you guilty, Fred, I never will," replied Gus, firmly.

"Even though I should be condemned?"

"Even though you should be condemned!"

"Heaven bless you, my dear friend," said Fred, grasping his hand, while tears sprang in his deep, dark eyes.

"And now I must leave you, Fred," said Gus. "I will see you to-morrow again, if possible. Meantime, remember the old motto: 'Hope on, hope ever.'"

"There remains but little for me to hope for," said Fred, sadly. "Hitherto, I have always borne an unsullied name, but now, the disgrace of this trial for murder will cling to me for life."

"Nonsense, Fred! the world is not so unjust 'Before morning dawns, night is ever darkest.' There are bright days in store for you yet, believe me."

"You are unusually full of 'wise saws' to-day, Gus," said Fred, with something like the old smile flitting over his handsome face. "I shall wait impatiently for your coming to-morrow; for, shut in this black hole, it seems like a glimpse of the outer world to catch sight of you."

Gus knocked at the door, to be let out. The jailer opened it and the youth disappeared.

* * * * * * * * *

The day of the trial came at last. Even at early morn the streets were crowded by the excited mob, anxious to catch a glimpse of the prisoner when he should be led forth. Stores were closed, for men forgot to buy and sell, in talking over the dreadful murder, and the assassin's probable fate. Women forgot their ordinary occupation to chat over the merits and demerits of the case, for the prisoner, being young, handsome, and highly connected, deeply interested the fair sex. Even children forgot their marbles and tops in the all-absorbing topic, and played at "trials," and talked

of judges and juries, instead of kites and penknives. In short, nothing was thought or spoken of but the one exciting subject—the trial of Frederic Stanley on the appalling charge of murder.

The doors were at length thrown open—the crowd rushed in and the courtroom was filled to suffocation. A deep, low murmur, like the surging of the sea, filled the air, as the mighty crowd swayed to and fro. The murmur increased almost into a roar as the prisoner, in the custody of the sheriff, entered. The dark, scowling faces on every side showed how deeply the mob were prejudiced against him, and it was with the utmost difficulty order could be maintained.

Fred entered with the careless grace habitual to him—his fine head erect, his keen, dark eyes fixed calmly on the excited crowd. More than one scowling glance fell before his haughty, scornful eye, and the public were forced to think that he looked far more like some captive prince than an assassin. If he were guilty, he certainly betrayed no sign of it.

Taking his place at the bar, Fred glanced again at the crowd in the courtroom. There sat Major Percival, with a brow stern and dark as night, his eyes fixed on the prisoner with a look of such intense hatred and loathing that he seemed longing to tear him limb from limb. Near him sat Nugent, his eyes fixed on the crowd, his brow clouded; but there was a look far more of sorrow than of anger in his face. That he believed him guilty there could be little doubt; and for a moment a feeling of despair weighed on the heart of Fred at the thought: "If Nugent Percival, with his open, generous nature, and noble mind, believes me capable of murder, what can I expect from strangers?"

At the opposite end of the courtroom, with his arms folded across his breast, his cloak thrown over his shoulders, and wrapped in his haughty pride as in a garment, sat Sir William Stanley. His face was cold and stern, his eye clear and unpitying, his mouth firm and rigid. Whether he believed in his son's guilt or not, it would be hard to determine. Nothing could be read from his face; all was stern and expressionless there.

Again he glanced over the crowd. Whichever way he turned, nothing met his eyes but fierce looks and sullen glances. Those who had been his friends in other days sat with downcast eyes and averted faces; no kindly look was there. Not one among all that immense crowd, if called upon to pronounce his doom, but would have shouted 'Guilty! Guilty!"

He turned away with a feeling of despair at his heart, but his outward bearing was bold, undaunted, and almost defying. He glanced at the Bench. Even the presiding judge seemed to have made up his mind as to the guilt of the prisoner, judging by the look his face wore.

As for the jury, little could be read from their blank faces, but more than one of them he knew to be his personal enemies.

Amid all that assembly there was but one who in his heart believed in the innocence of the prisoner. Gus, faithful to the last, stood by his side, returning every look of hatred directed toward his friend with compound interest, and endeavoring by his cheerful face and hopeful glances to encourage him to trust for the best.

Having taken his place, the usual charge was read, arraigning the prisoner for the wilful murder of Edith Percival, by stabbing her with a knife on the night of the fifth of June. Fred listened with outward calmness to the charge, and when the clerk of the court asked the usual question, "Frederic Stanley, how say you—are you guilty or not guilty of the felony with which you are charged?" his dark eye flashed and his lip curled, as he answered, with cold haughtiness:

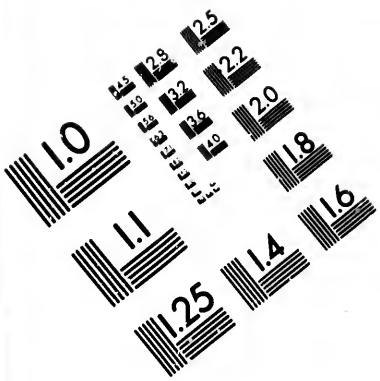
"Not guilty!"

The State's attorney then arose, and proceeded with his address. No pen can describe the emotions which his eloquence and pathos produced in minds already made up to believe the prisoner's guilt. To destroy any favorable impression the well-known nobleness and generosity of the prisoner might have made on the minds of the jury, he spoke of the excesses to which blind rage will often excite even the most tranquil; of his known haughtiness and fiery temper, which could never endure opposition.

He dwelt long and eloquently on each trifling circumstance that could by any possibility heighten his guilt, until Gus grew pale with apprehension.

As he proceeded to state the case, the audience were wrought up to a pitch of the highest excitement.

He stated that the prisoner at the bar had conceived a passion for his unhappy victim, knowing her to be the betrothed of another; how by his artful words he induced her to forget her plighted engagement, and turn her affections to himself; that he had audaciously disclosed his feelings to the father, boasting of his ascendancy over her at the same time; that, meeting with what he deserved, an indignant dismissal, he had departed in high anger; that some time after, her former engagement being broken by a circumstance not necessary to mention, the prisoner, on the evening of the murder, again made his appearance in the little village, thinking, no doubt, he was now sure of success; that he was met by the young lady's father, who refused to permit him to



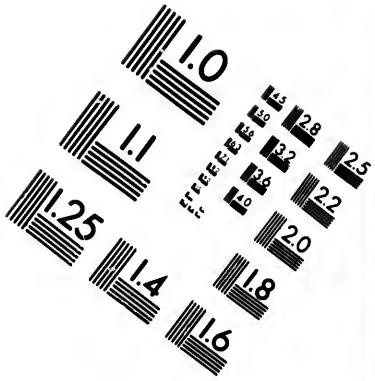
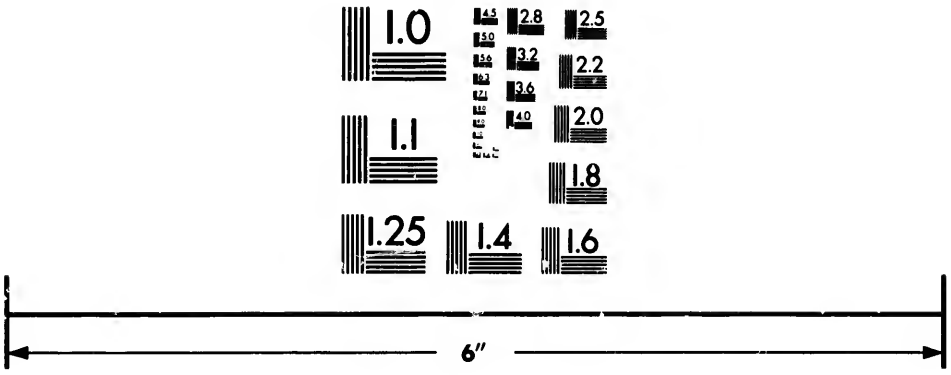
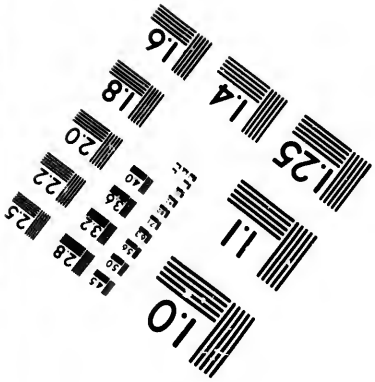
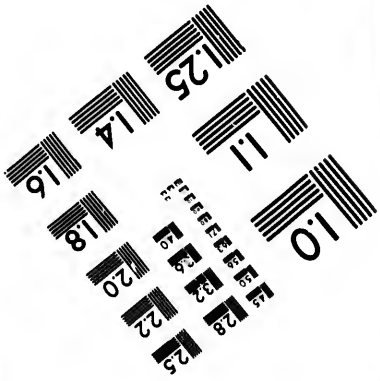


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)







Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

see her; that angry words ensued, and the prisoner rode off in high displeasure; but, instead of leaving the village, had, by means of a little boy, decoyed his victim to a lonely house, and there, upon her steadily refusing to fly with him, murdered her.

The prosecuting attorney spoke of all this at length, and not with the brevity with which it is summed up here.

He referred to the gentle and amiable character of the unhappy young lady—her beauty, her goodness, and the deep, trusting affection for himself with which her murderer had inspired her. How unsuspectingly she had been betrayed into meeting the unworthy object of her love, and because her sense of duty was greater than her affection for him, was, as she stood there with him, alone and helpless, basely assassinated.

So touching was the picture he drew, so pathetic were his words, that all the women present sobbed convulsively, and even among the men many eyes, all unused to the "melting mood," grew dim, and flashed still more fiercely through their tears on the prisoner, who, with his face shaded by his hand, strove to hide the agony he endured when the speaker dwelt on the harrowing fate of his beloved Edith.

The State's attorney concluded by saying he would prove his statements by facts—stern, undeniable facts—by competent and respectable witnesses, whom he would now call in the order in which the circumstances they were to prove occurred.

"Major Percival will take the stand."

The major advanced, and, after the usual oath, testified that the prisoner at the bar had conceived a passion for the deceased, which she returned; that the prisoner had boldly informed the witness of it, and that they had parted in high anger. That on the evening of the murder the witness had accidentally met the prisoner, and accosted him, demanding his business there, knowing he could have come for no good purpose; that the prisoner had audaciously told him he came to see his daughter once more before leaving the country; that he indignantly bade him begone, and that the prisoner, in a rage, had ridden off, and that he had not seen him since until today at the bar.

Being cross-examined, he admitted that at parting the prisoner had made use of no threats, and that his own words had been angry and insulting. The witness was then allowed to retire.

The next witness called was Nugent Percival.

He corroborated the testimony of his father; further deposed that after learning the particulars of the murder, he had, in company with his father, visited the spot; that he had found a dagger, stained with blood, which he knew to be the property of the prisoner, as it bore his name, and had been the gift of his father. That he likewise discovered a portion of a silk scarf, which he knew the deceased had worn on the night of the murder.

The dagger and scarf were produced, and identified by the witness.

A severe cross-examination followed, but nothing more was elicited.

Sir William Stanley was then called, who, after closely examining the dagger, pronounced it to be the same he had himself given to his son.

Fred listened like one thunderstruck to this testimony. That the dagger was his, there could be no doubt, and he now recollected having lost it a short time previous to the murder; but had troubled himself little about it—never dreaming it would yet witness so fatally against him in a court of justice.

Gus, who had listened with equal surprise, now stooped down and whispered:

"Bah! That proves nothing. The murderer might have accidentally found it or stolen it to lay the blame on you."

The third witness called was Edward Dillon.

Master Eddy came up with a swagger, evidently in the highest spirits. Convinced that nothing could be done to him for his share in the transaction, and elated by the reward promised him if he told the truth boldly, he was in excellent humor, and delighted to find himself shining off before so great a crowd.

"Witness, do you understand the nature of an oath?" asked the State's attorney.

"Spect I do," said Eddy, seriously.

"What is an oath?"

Eddy laid his finger on his nose in deep meditation; but, evidently, the question was a poser. He glanced appealingly at the judge, but that high functionary was looking at him through his gold-rimmed spectacles, with silent but overwhelming dignity. Finding no help from this quarter, Eddy scratched his head with a look of intense perplexity.

"Witness, what is an oath?" solemnly repeated his interlocutor.

"Well, if I must, I must, though I plaguey hate to," said Eddy. "When you told the tailor day before yesterday, when he asked you for his bill, to 'go to the devil,' that was an oath."

A roar of laughter from the crowd followed this, while the attorney, who was noted for now and then indulging in profanity, turned crimson with rage.

"Silence, sir, and answer to the point!" he angrily exclaimed. "Do you know where you'll go to when you die if you take a false oath?"

"Well, I s'pose I'd go where they say all the bad folks and the lawyers go."

And Eddy gave his head a peculiar jerk, to designate the place below.

Another snicker from the crowd followed this, and, convinced by this time that Eddy really did know the nature of an oath, the court concluded that the promising young gentleman should be sworn.

"Witness, look at the prisoner at the bar!"

Eddy turned and favored Fred with a patronizing nod and grin.

"Now, witness, you have seen the prisoner. Do you know him?"

"Well, I can't say that I am particularly acquainted with him," answered Eddy, gravely.

"Have you ever seen him before?"

"Well, now, I really couldn't say for certain, you know. Think I have, though."

"Does he look like any one you have ever seen?"

"If he had a long cloak on, and a hat pulled over his face, I wouldn't be s'prised if he looked uncommon like the chap as got me to go for Miss Edith."

"Witness, on your oath can you testify that this is the same person who paid you on the night of the murder to bring the young lady to the lone house on the Bluff?"

"'Twas after night, and his hat was away down over his face, and the rest of him was kivered up in a big cloak, and, not having the eyes of a cat, I couldn't 'stinguish him precisely. He was 'bout the size of that 'ere prisoner, though, and—yes, he had long black hair like him, too—I saw that."

"Well, now, tell the jury all that passed between you and the murderer that night."

Interlarding the narrative with many explanations of his own, not particularly lucid, and many profound observations on what he thought and said to "hisself," which were generally cut short by the unceremonious attorney, Eddy proceeded with his tale, which is too well known to need repetition here.

When he came to the meeting where Edith addressed her murderer as "Fred," the prisoner lifted his head and gazed upon the boy with a look of utter amazement. That he was telling the truth there could be no doubt, for there was an unmistakable look of honesty and candor on his face.

Eddy was severely cross-examined by the counsel for the defense, but all his answers were plain and straightforward, and to the point. At length, thoroughly exasperated by this raking fire of cross-questions, he indignantly and stoutly refused to answer a single question more. And, amid the laughter of the audience, Master Eddy was permitted to sit down.

The girl Betty was then called, who corroborated the evidence of Eddy, as far as coming for the deceased was concerned, and further identified the scarf as one the deceased had worn on leaving home.

The landlord of the inn was the next witness summoned, who deposed that a stranger, answering to the description given of the murderer, had engaged a room in his house for the night; that half an hour previous to the murder he had hastily left the house and turned in the direction of the old house on the Bluff; that he had returned in great haste, and evidently much excited, and drank a great deal of brandy; that upon the alarm of fire being given he had hastened out with the rest and that his almost frantic actions had excited the wonder of several; that after the fire he (the witness) had hastened home; that he observed the assassin plunge into the woods and return to his house no more. Being cross-examined, he could not swear positively that the prisoner at the bar and the murderer were one and the same person, as he had not, during the night, procured a good view of his face; but he thought they were the same—their height was alike, the color of their hair, etc.

Several other witnesses were examined, but nothing more of importance was elicited, and the court was shortly after adjourned until the following day.

On the second day of the great trial, the crowd was even greater than before—all eager to hear the fate of the prisoner. Every eye was turned upon him as he entered. Pale, but firm, his eagle eye met the gaze of that crowd, all anxious for his condemnation, without flinching, and, taking his seat, he lifted his princely head and fixed his dark eyes on the Bench as calmly as though the men before him held not his life in their hands.

When the last witness for the prosecution had been examined, the defense was taken up and conducted with great skill and eloquence by the counsel for the prisoner. He spoke at length upon the high character his client had always maintained, and enlarged on every point that could possibly be in his favor. It was evident, however, his words made but little impression on the minds of the jury.

The counsel for the prosecution then arose, and summed up the testimony against the prisoner in one mighty, crushing mass of evidence. When the judge stood up to charge the jury, the silence of that mighty crowd was so deep that it might almost be felt. It was quite evident that in his mind there existed no doubt of the prisoner's guilt, and though he urged the jury to deliberate calmly upon the evidence, every one present felt that the prisoner's doom was sealed.

The jury withdrew to deliberate, and the silence of that mighty crowd was so profound and ominous that it was pain-

ful to experience. Every eye was directed toward the prisoner, who, with his stately head erect, his proud, handsome face as cold and firm as marble, betrayed no sign of his feelings within. Gus, noble, true-hearted Gus, still stood faithfully by his side, his only remaining friend, and looking fierce defiance at every scowling glance directed toward Fred.

And what were the feelings of those who in other days had stood by him, during those awful moments of suspense? Sir William Stanley, as stern and grim as death itself, sat with his lips compressed, his stony eyes fixed on the floor, his iron face expressing no emotion whatever. Major Percival sat, deadly pale, but with the old look of mingled hatred and triumph on his face. Nugent's head was bowed on his hand, his face hidden by his falling hair.

Presently the jury re-entered. The foreman arose, and announced that their verdict was ready. One look at their sad, stern faces, and every heart stood still, knowing well what was to come.

The judge arose.

"Gentlemen of the jury, how say you, is the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"Not guilty!" cried the clear, excited voice of a female, and, forcing her way through the crowd that fell back in mingled fear and amazement, a young girl stood before the bench.

Throwing back the veil that hid her face, the newcomer turned slowly round and the wonder-struck spectators beheld the pale but beautiful Edith Percival.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EDITH'S STORY.

"Then think of this maxim, and cast away sorrow,
The wretched to-day may be happy to-morrow!"

For a moment the profound silence of intense amazement held every tongue speechless, every voice silent, and the dense crowd stood motionless, spell-bound! And then "Edith! Edith! Edith Percival!" rang out like the roar of the sea.

The excitement and uproar were fearful; the judge sat transfixed; the jury gazed on her with mouths and eyes agape; the crowd reeled and swayed to see one who seemed to have risen from the grave to vindicate the prisoner; the clerk of the court forgot to cry silence, and stood staring in speechless astonishment, like the rest.

And Fred—the sudden revulsion of feeling, the unexpected sight of one he imagined in heaven, came so stunningly upon him, that, for a moment, the sight left his eyes, his senses reeled, and he leaned his head upon the railing, feeling as though he should faint. It was but for an instant—then all his wonderful power of self-control came back, and he lifted his head—almost fearing what he had seen and heard was but a delusion, a dream. But no; there stood Edith alive, lovely and radiant as when he first beheld her—her soft blue eyes beaming upon him with such a look of deep, unutterable love.

With a passionate exclamation, Major Percival arose to his feet, and would have sprung toward his daughter, but as well might he have endeavored to force his way through a wall of iron as through that madly excited crowd. Nugent perceived how vain would be the effort, and, although almost delirious himself with overwhelming emotion, he strove to keep him back from the crushing throng of human beings.

But high above all the noise and uproar that filled the court-house, there arose a cry, a cry so full of unspeakable horror and despair that every heart stood still. All eyes were turned in the direction from whence it came, and there before them, like a galvanized corpse, stood Ralph De Lisle. Oh! such a ghastly face, such livid lips flecked with blood and foam, such wild, despairing, horror-struck eyes! Every face blanched with a deep, unspeakable awe as they gazed.

"Sheriff, I command you to arrest Ralph De Lisle, on charge of attempting the murder of Edith Percival," called a calm, commanding voice, that sounded strangely clear and cool amid all that wild storm of passion and excitement, and, waving his arm to where stood the conscience-stricken man, the Hermit of the Cliffs turned toward the Bench.

"Never!" shouted De Lisle, fiercely—all his presence of mind returning with the imminence of his danger, as he struggled madly to force his way through the waving sea of beings between him and the door.

But he struggled in vain. The strong hand of the officer grasped his collar in a grip of iron.

"Dog of a sheriff! release me!" he cried, foaming with rage, and endeavoring to wrench himself from his powerful grasp.

Half a dozen willing hands were raised to aid the officer, when De Lisle, seeing all hope was past, with the rapidity of lightning drew a pistol and leveled it at Edith. She stood white and motionless, unable to move, while a low cry of horror arose from the spectators. But his murderous object failed; for, as quick as thought, his arm was struck upward, while the pistol fell to the ground and went off. A shriek of pain followed, and a boy was raised from the floor bleeding, and carried out—the ball having lodged in his ankle.

This did not tend to allay the feelings

of the mob, who turned upon De Lisle and would have torn him in pieces but for the interference of the officers. His arms, after a desperate resistance, were pinioned firmly behind his back; and, still struggling like a madman, he was borne to a place of safety.

With the utmost difficulty, peace was at length restored, and Edith was commanded to tell her story; and then the deepest silence followed where a moment before all had been fierce noise and wild uproar, and all ears were bent and necks strained to catch each word that fell from her lips. But Edith was so weak and faint from excitement that her voice was inarticulate. A chair was brought for her, and a glass of water presented by Gus, who, poor, faithful fellow, scarcely knew whether he ought to laugh or cry, and consequently did neither; and then, revived, Edith turned to the Bench and began:

"I presume all here present know most of the events of that night. Oh, that dreadful night! I cannot even now think of it without a shudder.

"Thinking I was to visit his sister, I accompanied the boy, Eddy Dillon, from home. Forming some excuse, he persuaded me to go with him to the old house on the Bluff. As we ascended the hill the figure of a man wrapped in a cloak—his face hidden by his hat—stepped from the old house and stood before us. I imagined it to be Frederic Stanley, who that evening had been in the village; and, thinking he had employed the boy to lead me there for a clandestine interview, I addressed him by his name. He did not reply, but said something in a whisper to Eddy, who immediately ran away. Still thinking it was Fred, I followed him into the old house, and again called him by his name. Still he was silent. I grew alarmed; when he dropped his cloak, and raised his hat, I saw before me my mortal enemy—Ralph De Lisle!"

Edith shuddered, and covered her face with her hands as memory conjured up that almost fatal night.

"I was so shocked, so startled, so terror stricken, that for a moment I almost fainted. I scarcely know how I rallied, but I was inspired by sudden courage, and stood fearlessly before him. He urged me to fly with him or die. Death was preferable to life with him, and I refused. Blinded, maddened by my refusal, he drew a dagger and plunged it into my side. Dimly, as one remembers a frightful dream, I recollect falling to the ground; then I drew out the knife, and then all grew dark, and, with a dull, roaring sound as of many waters in my ears, memory and life were alike for a time lost in oblivion.

"When I again opened my eyes I found myself lying in the little cottage among the cliffs, occupied by the aged hermit. For days I hovered between death and life, and, with a care for which I can never be sufficiently grateful, the hermit watched over me night and day. He scarcely ever left me, even for his necessary repose; and, owing to his care, I slowly recovered. He said it would be dangerous to remove me home, and I was too weak and powerless to care where I was. As he never went out, we heard nothing of what was transpiring in the outer world, until yesterday, yielding to my entreaties, he went to inform my parents that I was still alive. The first person he met related the arrest of Mr. Stanley, and informed him that he was to be tried for murdering me, today. With almost frantic haste he turned home and told me all; and, scarcely pausing to make the necessary arrangements, we started for this place, and, thank Heaven! we have arrived in time to vindicate the innocence of Frederic Stanley."

Edith paused and glanced with a look of unchangeable affection toward the spot where Fred sat—his face alternately flushing and paling with powerful emotion. There was a moment's dead silence, and then a cheer that made the old court-house ring came from every excited heart. Yes, in that moment a complete revulsion of feeling took place in every breast. Fred's triumph was complete; and, with its usual impulsive considerateness, the mob as heartily rejoiced in his innocence, as, a few moments previously, they had done in his guilt.

"But how were you rescued?" said the judge, partaking of the universal excitement. "This blank in your story"—

"Can be filled by me," interrupted the hermit, stepping forward. "On the night in question, passing accidentally—or rather by a dispensation of Providence which men call chance—near the Bluff, I beheld, to my surprise, a sudden jet of flame shoot up from a pile of rubbish. Anxious to know the cause, I hastened up and entered the old barn. All was deserted and dreary around; and I was about to quit it and give the alarm when my eyes fell on an object lying at my feet that almost transfixed me with horror—that froze the very blood in my veins. There, lying cold and lifeless, bathed in blood, lay Edith Percival. In a moment the whole truth burst upon me. She had been murdered there, and the assassin had set fire to the house to conceal the evidence of his crime. Should I leave her to perish in the flames? No; not if I died with her. An almost superhuman strength seemed to inspire me. I raised her lifeless form in my arms as though she had been an infant, and turned in the direction of the cliffs. At any other time the feat

would have been impossible; but a strength not my own seemed suddenly to have been granted to me, and ere morning dawned we had reached my little cottage in safety.

I had imagined her dead; but, to my surprise and joy, I soon discovered signs of life. Having a little knowledge of surgery, I examined the wound, and discovered that, though dangerous, it was far from being mortal. I applied such remedies as I knew to be good in such a case, and, in the course of a few days, she began to recover. I did not wish to tell her friends, knowing they would disturb her with visits, and perhaps insist on having her removed—a proceeding which I knew would be highly dangerous. The world calls me odd and eccentric—perhaps this was one of my eccentricities; beside, I wished to have the pleasure of returning to her family her whom they imagined dead. It never occurred to me that any one but the real murderer would be arrested. Judge, therefore, of my surprise, when the first time I left home I learned that Frederic Stanley had been arrested, and was about to be tried for her murder. I lost no time in hastening here—and here I am."

And then such another shout as rent the air!—the crowd seemed to have gone wild. Then the court was adjourned, and the prisoner discharged; and Edith went over and laid her hand in his, and looked up in his face with her love-beaming eyes.

The friends of Fred were now pressing around, to shake hands and congratulate him on his triumphant vindication. And first among them came Gus, with "a smile on his lips and a tear in his eye," and who shook Fred's hand until it ached, and who squeezed Edith's little hand until her fingers tingled. Then way was made for Major Percival and his son, the dense crowd opening right and left to allow them to pass. Their meeting was not a very demonstrative one—it could not be in that crowded courtroom; but it was none the less heartfelt and deep for that.

"And Fred, papa?" said Edith, gently.

The face of the major grew red with a flush of honest shame and embarrassment, as he held out his hand. For a moment Fred hesitated; all his pride rose, as he recollected the many indignities he had received from the man before him. Edith saw the struggle in his mind, and, laying her hand on his arm, and lifting her soft, reproachful eyes to his face, she said:

"Dear Fred!"

He could not resist that witching glance. The next moment his hand grasped that of the major in the warm clasp of friendship.

"And thus do I atone for the past," said the major, placing the hand of Edith in that of Fred.

In that moment the past—all its wrongs, and sorrows, and sufferings—was forgotten. That instant of bliss more than compensated him for the troubled, stormy past.

There was one other whose eyes fell on that scene. Ralph De Lisle, pinioned like a malefactor, and led out between two officers, saw it as he passed. He gnashed his teeth in impotent rage; and his eyes, in their frenzied despair, glared upon them like the burning orbs of a tiger. Such a look of undying hate and fierce anguish Lucifer might have worn when cast from heaven. His livid lips opened to heap curses upon them, but words refused to come. His face grew black and convulsed—his eyes turned in their sockets—he reeled, and would have fallen to the ground, had not the officers supported him in their arms.

As they raised him from the ground, a dark stream of blood flowed from his mouth. In his agony of rage and despair, he had ruptured a blood vessel.

They bore him off to prison, while the spectators gazed on horror-struck. Faint and sick, Edith hid her face on her brother's shoulder with a shudder.

"Let us go," said Nugent, turning away, pale with horror, as he passed his arm around his sister's waist, to lead her from the room.

"You will accompany us, of course?" said the major, in an imperative tone to Fred, who glanced at Edith, and bowed, with a smile. "And you, too," added the major, turning to the hermit, whose eyes were fixed, as if fascinated, on Sir William Stanley, as, borne along by the swaying rush, he was approaching them.

"No," said the hermit, gravely; "my task is ended, and I must return home."

"Oh, pray, come with us," said Edith, eagerly; "you will be much happier, I am sure, than living all alone among those dreary cliffs."

But the hermit only shook his head, and steadily refused.

Finding entreaties vain, they turned to go out, when, unable to extricate himself from the crowd, Sir William Stanley stood directly beside them. All paused in momentary expectation. Fred's cheek flushed and his heart throbbed as he caught his father's eye. He would have held out his hand, but the baronet's stern look forbade it. Lifting his hat to Edith, he bowed coldly to the rest, and passed on, with the same look of iron inflexibility his hard face always wore. Suddenly his eye fell on the hermit, who was half hidden behind the tall figure of Fred. He gave a sudden start, as though he had received a galvanic shock—his face grew deadly white, and then deepest crimson, as he

plunged into the crowd and disappeared.

A carriage was in waiting to convey the party to Percival Hall. The hermit, in spite of their united entreaties, persisted in refusing to accompany them, and at the door bade them farewell. The major, Edith, Nugent, Fred and Gus therefore entered and were soon on their way home. They traveled slowly, for Edith was still weak, and the next day, about noon, they arrived at the Hall. Who can describe the meeting that there ensued? Joy seldom kills; and though the shock nearly extinguished the slight spark of life that yet lingered in the breast of Mrs. Percival, she slowly began to recover. As for Nell, her first impulse was to embrace every one present, which she accordingly did; to the great disgust of Gus—who would have been infinitely better pleased to have received them all himself. That young lady remained quite serious for a day or two, but after that she became the same incorrigible she had been before. And Gus, driven to desperation, declared that, of all the trials his friend had been afflicted with, he had never to endure so severe a trial as Nell Percival.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH."

"Burning heart and beating brow
Ye are very quiet now"
—E. B. Browning

It was night, dark, chill and dismal. The rain pattered with spectral fingers against the grated windows, the wind moaned and wailed drearily without.

In his cold, fireless cell, sat the once gay and handsome Ralph De Lisle. Dark and wild was the storm without, and darker and wilder was the heart within his bosom. His face was blanched to the hue of death, and looked still whiter, contrasted with his heavy black locks. He was half reclining on his wretched bed—lying so still, so motionless, that one might have thought him dead, but for the fierce living light blazing in his wild black eyes.

It was wonderful how he could lie there so immovable, with such a fire in his heart; the burning fire of remorse. All his life seemed passing in review before him, and he almost shuddered to himself, so young in years, yet so old in crime. His part in the drama of life was over; and the world would go round as though he had never existed. He felt like a man who has staked his all on the gaming-table, and lost. The world had been to him a chessboard, and men and women had moved as he willed; but an unseen though powerful hand had been playing against him; another had won, and Ralph De Lisle was checkmated in the great game of life.

Like some dark panorama, all the events of his life were still passing before him. He thought of the past—of his boyhood, with all its bright promises, high hopes, and glorious delusions. How easy all those noble projects seemed of realization then, but, like the mirage of the desert, one by one they had faded away at his approach. His radiant day-dreams had all set in a sea of blood and crime, and he had gone down, down, in his rapid career of crime, not daring to look back at the height from which he had fallen. And then came his visions of that bright land of light and roses, where Edith reigned queen, and once more he seemed wandering with her through the dim aisles of the grand old wood, and watching, with his old feeling of adoration, the golden sunlight falling on her flowing hair. His prison walls stretched away, and he saw himself standing in the lofty rooms of Percival Hall, with Edith blushing and smiling beside him, his betrothed bride. He saw her so vividly before him with her sunny smile, and her blue, love-beaming eyes sinking beneath his, that the almost forgotten love of other days came back, and with the irrepressible cry, "Oh, Edith! my hope! my dream! my life!" he stretched out his arms, almost expecting to enfold the radiant vision before him. It faded away in thin air, and he awoke with a start from the trance into which he was falling

The past was gone; he could think of it no longer. And the present! Could this be he, Ralph De Lisle, the high-born, the haughty—this convicted felon? Had all his daring projects, his bold schemes, from which less reckless minds would have shrunk—all his fearless deeds, come to this at last? He had trampled the solemn commands of God and the slavish laws of men alike under his feet; he had committed crimes that no other would have dared to contemplate, until he had begun to fancy himself above punishment. He had gone on so long in his reckless career of crime with impunity, that he had forgotten a day of reckoning must yet come; now he realized it at length. He could have made his escape after the diabolical crime had been perpetrated, but some power within chained him to the spot. He felt sure Fred Stanley would be convicted, and then his triumph would be complete. After the execution of his rival, his intention was to return to England, and in God-forgetting London lose the recollection of the past. But all his projects had fallen to the ground with a crash; she whom he imagined dead was clasped in the arms of his hated foe, and her stern father smiled on their union; a life of happiness was before them—and he was here.

What had the future in store for him? His trial was soon to come, and he saw

the eyes of the crowd fixed upon him in hatred and derision. They whom if at liberty he would have spurned under his feet, could now point to him in scorn as the foiled assassin. If the law found him guilty and he was condemned—he shuddered as the gallows and all the fearful paraphernalia of a felon's death rose before him. The maddened crowd, glaring at him with their savage eyes, and ready to tear him limb from limb as they attempted to do in the court-house. And his rival, his mortal enemy, would be there to exult over his ignominious death.

But his life might be saved! True, he was as much a murderer as though his victim had perished in the burning house; but the law might not find him so. And if he was spared, what then? A long lifetime of drudgery among felons, the lowest of the low, until death would place him in the convict's despised grave!

Those hands, small and white as a woman's, must grow hard and coarse with unceasing toil; and he, De Lisle, born to wealth and honor, must herd with thieves and murderers for the remainder of his life. The picture grew too horrible to be longer endured. He sprang from his bed, with the perspiration standing in great beaded drops on his brow—his hand clenched until the nails sank into the quivering flesh—his eyes bloodshot and glaring—an expression of horror unutterable on his ghastly face! Oh, in that moment, how fearful was the maddening storm of passion in his guilty heart! A lifetime of agony seemed concentrated into each second as it passed; the blood seemed to pour like molten lead through every vein, a wheel of fire seemed crashing through his brain; his very eyes seemed like red-hot balls of fire.

He strode up and down like a maniac, and, springing to the window, shook the iron bars with the fierce strength of madness! His hands were cut and bleeding, but he heeded it not, as he struggled like a caged tiger to wrench them away. All in vain! The strong grating resisted all his efforts, and he fell heavily with his face on the stone floor. His head struck on something sharp, and the blood rained down from a gash in his forehead. He pressed his hand to the wound, and gazed on the flowing blood with a smile that might have chilled the stoutest heart.

"Never shall they so degrade Ralph De Lisle!" he shouted, springing to his feet. "This night the tragedy shall be completed, and the gaping mob cheated of its victim! Do I not hold my life in my own hands? and shall I live to become a mark for the finger of scorn to point at? Never! To this world, with all its dreams and delusions; to sun, and moon, and stars, I will this night bid adieu. Ere morning dawns this body, and the spirit it contains, will have sunk into nothingness."

Into nothingness! Was it a dream, or was it the mocking laugh of a fiend that rang through the lonely cell?

"Eternity! eternity!" he said, passing his hand across his clammy brow; "can it be that what preachers tell us is true, and that there really is any hereafter? My mother taught me so once—my mother! fiend that I am, dare I mention her sacred name? Well, in a few moments I will have solved that problem, and have learned the mystery that no living man can ever know."

He walked to the window and listened. How the driving rain beat against that little casement; how the wind howled and roared! It seemed to him like the voice of the Destroyer, shouting impatiently for his prey. From the black pall of night that no eye could penetrate, white, spectral faces seemed gleaming, mocking him with their deriding laughter. He turned away; amid the war of the elements and the roar of the tempest should his dark, crimson-stained soul go forth.

The storm passed away with the morning's dawn. The bright summer sunshine was streaming gloriously through the window when the jailer entered. And there, right in the glow of the blessed sunlight, hung the convulsed form of Ralph De Lisle—dead by his own hand.

Of all the sights which the sun rose upon, it looked on none more fearful than that. Without the prison walls, the stream of busy life flowed merrily on; the bride stood at the altar, the man of business hurried by, and people talked and laughed as though despair was a word unknown; and within, stark and cold in the glare of the sunlight, lay the rigid form of the dead man, his face upturned to the sky, and staring wide open were the glassy eyes that never would look on aught in this world again!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

"And thus through all my life it stalked,
That deadly, deadly sin!
Though e'er so fair the outside mirth,
The spectre sat within."

"Go, Elva, go! I must see him before I die!"

"Oh, father, listen to the storm! How can I go out to-night!"

"Girl! I tell you I must see him—I must! Do you hear? Even though fire were falling from heaven, you should have to go forth and bring him to me!"

"But, father, I know not where he is! I could brave the storm, but you may die here before I return!"

"I cannot die—I will not die before

you return!" almost screamed Paul Snowe, tossing in wild delirium on his pillow. "Go and find Sir William Stanley, I tell you, and bring him here to me. I cannot die until I have seen him."

It was that same tempestuous night on which Ralph De Lisle had breathed his last; and now his accomplice in crime, Paul Snowe, lay wounded unto death. Strange that, on the same night, both should be doomed to die.

He lay in the little room of the inn, near Percival Hall. It was the same house in which De Lisle had planned the murder of Edith a few weeks before. Perhaps the recollection of that night added to his delirium, as he tossed on his bed in feverish agony.

A week before, as he loitered round the village, bound by some unaccountable fascination to the place of the supposed murder, he had been stabbed in a drunken brawl. Finding his days were numbered, he had caused them to send for his daughter, Elva, who had arrived a few hours before.

Troubled and anxious, Elva threw her cloak over her shoulders, and, tying on her hood, hurried out into the driving rain. As she passed out, she encountered the burly landlord, who gazed at her as though he had seen a ghost.

"Jerusalem!" he ejaculated, in amazement, "you ain't going out anywhere in this storm, Miss Snowe?"

"Can you tell me where Sir William Stanley is to be found?" inquired Elva, hurriedly.

"Well, no, I rayly can't; but his son lives up at Percival Hall. Likely he can tell you."

"Percival Hall!" said Elva, with a start. "Does it belong to Major Percival?"

"Yes'm."

"Has he a daughter, Edith?" inquired Elva, with increased agitation.

"Yes'm," again responded mine host, looking rather surprised at the emotion she manifested.

"Edith! dear Miss Edith!" exclaimed the impulsive Elva, in a sort of rapture, as she darted out into the blinding storm.

"Well, I never," said the jolly landlord, opening his eyes in amazement, until they resembled two midnight moons.

In a moment she was back again, and by his side.

"Can you tell me which way I must go to reach Percival Hall?" she asked, breathlessly.

"Yes'm. Keep on straight for a spell, then turn to the right and take the forest road. Mind, and don't go the other way, or you'll break your neck over the cliffs. You'd better let me send Jemmy along with you to show you the way, 'cause—oh! she's gone! She's a queer one, and no mistake," said the worthy landlord, hastening to raise up the spirits of his guests by pouring his own spirits down.

Meantime Elva pursued her lonely way through the driving rain and blinding storm, toward Percival Hall, almost flying along in her haste to reach it. I scarcely know whether it is proper to tell a young lady's thoughts or not; but certain it is that, though Edith occupied a prominent place in her mind, Edith's brother occupied a still more prominenter (I don't know whether that's according to Webster, or not).

But Elva, bewildered by the storm, her own thoughts, her haste, and the strangeness of the place, forgot the landlord's directions, and took the road leading to the cliffs. On she went, stumbling and slipping over rocks and crags, at the imminent danger of breaking her neck. Suddenly, the flash of a light caught her eye, and, walking in that direction, she soon found herself before the home of the Hermit of the Cliffs. Elva rapped loudly, and a moment after the door was opened, and the hermit himself stood before her, holding a lamp in his hand, the full light of which fell on his imposing figure.

With a half-suppressed scream of mingled terror and surprise at this singular apparition, Elva turned to fly, when she was arrested by the mild, kind voice of the hermit:

"Fear not, my daughter; the Hermit of the Cliffs is the friend of all mankind."

Elva paused and stood hesitating.

"Come in out of the storm, my child. It is a wild night for a young girl like you to be abroad."

Reassured by his friendly words, and wishing to know more of this strange-looking personage, Elva, who was naturally courageous, entered the cottage.

She glanced curiously around, but there was nothing very singular about it. It was fitted up as any other common room might have been, and was singularly neat and clean.

"Now, my child, what can I do for you?" asked the hermit, in his grave, pleasant tones.

"I started for Percival Hall," answered Elva, "and, being a stranger here, I lost my way; and, guided by the light of your lamp, I wandered here and sought admittance."

"You had better stay here until morning," said the hermit; "the night is too stormy for you to venture abroad."

"Oh, no! I cannot. My father is dying, and I cannot rest until he sees Sir William Stanley. I must hasten to Percival Hall immediately, if you will be kind enough to show me the way."

"Sir William Stanley, did I understand you to say?" said the hermit, with a sudden start.

"Yes. Perhaps you can tell me where to find him."

"Who is your father, child?" asked the hermit, without heeding her question.

"His name is Paul Snowe," replied Elva.

"What!" exclaimed the hermit, almost bounding from the floor.

"His name is Paul Snowe," repeated Elva, drawing back in surprise and alarm.

"Good Heavens! is it possible!" said the hermit, deeply excited. "And are you Paul Snowe's daughter?"

"Yes, sir," said the astonished Elva.

"What is your name?"

"Elvena Snowe."

"Elvena! Elvena!" repeated the hermit. "Can there be two Elvena Snowe's in the world?"

"Sir, I must go," said Elva, in alarm, beginning to think him insane.

"Wait one moment, and I will go with you," said the hermit, cloaking himself with wonderful celerity. "Can it be that I will see Paul Snowe yet once again before I die?"

They passed out, and the hermit turned in the direction of the inn, holding Elva firmly by the hand.

"But I must go to Percival Hall," said Elva, drawing back.

"Why?"

"To see Sir William Stanley."

"He is not there, child!"

"His son is, then, and he can tell me where to find him. I must go," said Elva, wildly.

"His son knows no more of his whereabouts than you do, Elvena. Believe me, it is impossible for you to find him to-night. If Paul Snowe wishes anything, I will do as well as William Stanley. Do not hesitate," he added, as Elva still hung back; "I repeat, it is utterly impossible for you to find him to-night. Come."

Elva felt convinced that he spoke the truth, and, seeing no alternative, she allowed him to draw her on, inwardly dreading to meet her father without the man for whom she had been sent.

On reaching the inn, the hermit demanded to be at once shown to the chamber of the sick man. As they entered, Paul Snowe half raised himself on his elbow, and glared at them with his inflamed eyes.

"Elva, is it you?" he cried. "Have you brought Sir William Stanley? Ha! who are you?"

"Your best friend, Paul Snowe," said the hermit, advancing to his bedside.

"I should know that voice. Who are you?"

"Men call me the 'Hermit of the Cliff,' but you knew me by another name once," was the answer.

"And Sir William Stanley, where is he, Elva? Elva, did you not bring him?" exclaimed the wounded man, in an agony of alarm.

"My friend, you cannot see him. Sir William Stanley is many a mile from here. You will never meet him in this world again, for your hours are numbered. Anything you wish to tell him, confide in me, and, believe me, he shall hear it."

"Can I—dare I tell you? You will not have me arrested?" said the invalid, wildly.

"No, my friend; you are beyond the reach of human laws. Speak, and fear not."

"Men say you are good and generous," said Paul, tossing restlessly; "therefore, since it cannot be helped, I will tell you. Elva, leave the room. Listen; what I have to say concerns her."

"Your daughter, Elva?"

"She is no daughter of mine; neither is her name Elva. I stole her when a child. Her name is Leila Stanley!"

He fixed his eyes on the hermit's face, to see what effect this announcement would have; but, beyond one sudden, convulsive start, he betrayed no emotion.

"Go on," he said, after a pause.

"To tell why I stole her, it will be necessary to go back in my history. I once had a sister—her name was Elvena—whom I loved as I never loved any other human being in this world. She grew up a beautiful girl, the pride and belle of our village; but in an evil hour she met Sir William Stanley. He was young and handsome in those days, and she soon learned to love him. He pretended to return her affection; and, under an assumed name, he wooed and won her. She became his wife—little dreaming she had wedded a baronet. Well, I must hurry on, for I feel that I have but a few moments to live. He used to go to England, under pretense of business, and, on one of these occasions, he married again some high-born lady. He had grown tired of his first wife, for he was always a heartless villain; but he wanted his son (they had one child). He came and forcibly tore him away, and departed for England. I don't know what story he told Lady Stanley about the child; probably that he had been married, and that his wife was dead, or some other convenient lie. I was absent at the time, but when I returned I learned what had happened—that my sister had gone crazy and wandered off, and, as we afterward learned, died in a distant village. I swore a fearful oath of vengeance, and that oath has been kept. Years passed on before I could go to England and seek out my sister's murderer. I found him out at last, and learned that he had another

child—a daughter, whom both he and Lady Stanley almost idolized. He had stolen Elvena's child from her, and so caused her death. He should suffer as she had done—he, too, should know what it was to lose a child; and one day, when she was out playing, I carried her off.

"My first intention had been to kill little Leila, but I could not do it. As you may imagine, there was a mighty uproar made about Sir William Stanley's child being kidnapped; the whole country was aroused, but I eluded them all. I had a friend—the mate of a small trading-vessel, and his wife consented to take care of the little lady. I gave her my dead sister's name, and, as Leila grew up, she forgot she ever had any other parent but me. I brought her here, and, after a time, fell in with Ralph De Lisle, and joined his reckless band of licensed cutthroats.

"But during all those years undying remorse for what I had done haunted me day and night. Lady Stanley had died shortly after her child's loss; and, when I heard of it, I felt as though I were a murderer. Do what I would, reason as I pleased, my accusing conscience slept not. I was not one to inspire affection, but I think Elva really likes me. I grew fond of the child myself, but I never could endure her caresses; for at such times the recollection of what I had done would rush upon me with double force, and I would think how she would shrink from me in horror did she know to what I had reduced her—the heiress of a baronet.

"In after years, I met Sir William Stanley's son. Loving my sister as I did, it may seem strange to you I did not love her child also; but I hated him for his father's sake. He was once imprisoned by De Lisle, and liberated by Elva, who little dreamed she was liberating her own brother.

"As I told you, my undying remorse gave me no rest, and I resolved at last to tell Sir William Stanley what I had done, and then, if possible, fly the country. But the hand of Providence overtook me, and my tale of crime has been reserved for my death-bed confession.

"The dress Elva wore the day I stole her is in yonder chest," continued the dying man, pointing faintly in the direction; "also, a small locket containing her mother's portrait. If anything further is needed to establish her identity, there is a peculiar mark on her arm that cannot be mistaken, and will set at rest all doubts. And now, thank Heaven, my story is ended, and justice has been done at last. It is said that you have great power over Sir William Stanley; therefore, you will have no trouble in inducing him to believe my dying words."

"Thus it is that Heaven ever confounds the wicked, and brings hidden things of darkness to light. Thus it is that justice shall be rendered unto all men at last," said the hermit, clasping his hands solemnly.

"That voice!—that voice!" said Paul Snowe, raising himself wildly on the pillow. "Has the grave given up its dead? Are you a man or a being from the world of spirits? Great Heaven, are you"—

Ere the hermit could speak, the fearful death-rattle resounded through the room. He clutched the air convulsively, his eyes grew fixed and glassy, and, falling heavily back on his pillow—all was over!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT LAST.

"All's well that ends well."

HALF an hour passed away in the chamber of death ere the hermit moved. He sat gazing still and silent, on the rigid form before him, wondering, perhaps, how such fierce passions could have existed in that clay-cold form.

Then he arose, and, opening the door, beckoned Elva to enter. Awed by the expression of his face, she stole softly into the room, and approached the bed. As her eyes fell upon the rigid figure stretched upon it, she sprang back with a wild cry of grief.

For, with all his faults, and notwithstanding all his cruelty, Elva had really loved Paul Snowe. He had been the only friend and protector she had ever known, and with a passionate exclamation, "Oh, father—father!" she fell on her knees by the bedside and hid her face in her hands.

"My child, grieve not," said the hermit, laying his hand on her head. "Paul Snowe was no father of thine."

She arose and stood before him, with parted lips and wonder-dilated eyes.

"Not my father?" she said. "Who, then, is?"

"Sir William Stanley."

She did not speak, but stood still, regarding him with such a wild, startled look of incredulity and amazement that he hastened to explain.

"Sir William Stanley had wronged him, and to revenge himself, he stole his only daughter. Your name is not Elva Snowe, but Leila Stanley."

"And this was why he implored me so wildly to bring him Sir William Stanley?" said Elva, in a low, breathless tone, almost bewildered by this sudden announcement.

"It was; he could not die in peace until he had confessed what he had done. And now that you know how deeply he has wronged you, can you forgive him?"

Elva was gazing sadly and intently on the death-cold form before her. At the

hermit's question, she looked up and said, earnestly:

"Forgive him? Oh, yes, as I hope to be forgiven. But this seems so strange—so improbable—so like an Eastern romance. Can it be that I really have a father living?"

"And a brother, likewise. You have seen Fred Stanley?"

"Yes—yes; I have seen him. He is tall, and dark and handsome as a prince. And he is my brother! Something drew me toward him from the first; but I never, never could have imagined anything so wild as this! He is somewhere, near this, is he not?"

"Yes; at Percival Hall."

"Shall I see him to-night?"

"No; it were better not. The last remains of Paul Snowe must be consigned to the grave first. For a day or two you will remain with me, and then all shall be revealed."

* * * * * * * * *

"What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

The great drawing-room of Percival Hall was ablaze with light. From basement to attic the house was crowded with guests, assembled from far and near, to witness the nuptials of Major Percival's daughters.

Fred and Gus, looking excessively happy, and very unnecessarily handsome, stood before the venerable clergyman, who, in full canonicals and imposing dignity, pronounced the words that made them the happiest of men. Edith and Nell, radiant with smiles and white satin, blushes and orange-flowers, stood by their side, promising dutifully to "love, honor and obey;" although, if the truth must be told, Nell hesitated a little before she could promise the latter.

Suddenly the door was flung open, and in a pompous tone, the aristocratic butler announced:

"Sir William Stanley."

Had a bomb exploded in their midst, greater consternation could not have appeared on every face present, as Sir William, pale, wild, excited and agitated, stood before them.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Sir William," said Major Percival, advancing with extended hand.

"My daughter—my daughter! is she here?" demanded the baronet, wildly.

"Your daughter?" said Major Percival, in surprise. "If you mean Edith"—

"No, no, no, no! I mean my own child—my long-lost Leila!"

"Can he be deranged?" said the major, turning to Fred with a look of alarm.

"I am not mad—read that!" said Sir William, handing the major a note.

"Go to Percival Hall," it said. "This night you shall hear of your lost daughter, Leila."

"It is from the mysterious Hermit of the Cliffs," said the major, in astonishment. "What can he mean?"

"What he says," said a calm, clear voice that made them all start as they turned and beheld the hermit in their midst.

"My daughter—my Leila—what of her?" exclaimed Sir William, striding forward.

"Behold her!" said the hermit, stepping back, and every eye turned to the slight, girlish figure behind him.

"Elva Snowe!" exclaimed a half dozen voices simultaneously, while the baronet started back suddenly at the name.

"Not Elva Snowe, but Leila Stanley," said the hermit, drawing her forward. "On his death-bed, Paul Snowe confessed he had stolen her, and resigned her to me. This trinket was on her person when stolen. Probably you recollect it, Sir William."

"Yes—yes; it was I who placed it on her neck; but, if Leila, she bears on her arm a singular mark"—

"Look," said the hermit, pushing up her sleeve, and exposing a little crimson heart; "are you convinced now?"

"My child—my child!" exclaimed Sir William, clasping in his arms the shrinking Elva. "Thank Heaven, I have found you at last."

Amazement held every one silent. But the hermit advanced and said:

"You have found one child, and the other"—

"Shall be mine likewise," interrupted the baronet, approaching Fred, "if he can forgive the past."

"Willingly, joyfully, my dear father!" said Fred, grasping his hand while tears sprang to his dark eyes. "And Elva—Leila rather—may I claim a brother's privilege?" he added, pressing his mustached lip to her blushing brow.

"And now for a still more surprising discovery," said Sir William, turning with much agitation toward the hermit. "On this joyful occasion it will not do to have one cloud marring our festivity. If you can forgive me for the great wrong I have done you, we may see many happy days together yet."

For a moment the hermit hid his face in his hands, while his whole frame quivered with powerful emotion. Then, raising his head, to the amazement of all present, he removed his flowing white hair and his long beard. His large, flowing robe fell from his shoulders, and lo! a pale, stately, dark-haired woman stood before them.

Wonder chained every tongue. Sir William Stanley sprang forward and clasped her in his arms, exclaiming passionately:

"My wife—my wife—my own Elva!"

"Good Heaven! Sir William Stanley,

what means all this?" exclaimed Major Percival, finding his tongue at last.

"It means," said Sir William, raising his head proudly, "that this lady is my first, my only wife, Elvena Snowe. Deeply have I wronged her, but I shall strive to atone for it, by a public confession to-night. When I forcibly took her son from her, yonder youth, she was for a time deranged and wandered away from the village of her birth. After a time a report went forth that she was dead. She heard it, when sanity partially returned, and resolved never to return to the spot where she had suffered so much. She found a cottage deserted among the wild cliffs, and resolved to make her home there. Afraid that some one would recognize and bring her back, with the cunning of partial derangement, she disguised herself as you have seen, and for years lived on alone, until she learned to love the dreary spot. When the war commenced I came here, and was followed by my son. She heard of it, and, unknown herself, she determined to watch over her son. I, as you all know, had condemned him to die. At the eleventh hour she came, and by disclosing who she was, saved his life. I believed her, for the time, to be a being from the world of spirits, and the shock and surprise were so great that I spared my son. Afterward we met, and she told me all; but pride would not allow me to confess to the world my guilt. But now since Leila has been so miraculously restored, I can trample pride and the opinion of the world under foot, and proclaim the once Hermit of the Cliffs my wife, in the face of heaven and earth!"

* * * * * * * *

A month later, Sir William and Lady Stanley were bounding over the blue waves to "Merrie England."

They went not alone, for Leila, now Mrs. Nugent Percival, and her husband, accompanied her.

Fred and Edith and Gus and Nell dwelt in the land they loved best.

* * * * * * * *

And now, reader, farewell. We have journeyed together long, but nothing can last forever. All things must have a close, and the characters who have passed before you must disappear from your view at last. I, too, must go from your sight—for the daylight is dying out of the sky, and my task is ended. I trust, however, we may meet again.

[THE END.]

THE SISTER OF CHARITY.

By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING,

Author of "A Wonderful Woman," "A Terrible Secret," "The Mystery at Blackwood Grange," "Sir Noel's Heir," Etc., Etc.

"She was once a lady of honor and wealth
Bright glowed on her features the roses of health;
Her vesture was blended of silk and of gold,
And her motion shook perfume from every fold.
Joy revelled around her, love shone at her side,
And gay was her smile, as the glance of a bride,
And light was her step in the mirth-sounding hall,
When she heard of the daughters of Vincent de Paul."

G. GRIFFEN.

This was my first visit to the city. All my life had been spent in a quiet country farmhouse, far removed from the noise and bustle and din of the outer world. The most exciting events of my life were my first parasol and my first beau. So it will not be wondered at that I was completely bewildered with delight at the ever-varying scenes and faces I met in my new home. There was a vast difference between passing my evenings quietly knitting, or sewing, or reading, as I had formerly done, and going each night to balls, and parties, and concerts, and operas, as I did now.

Among the many new acquaintances I made there, there was one who particularly struck me from the first. This was a young lady, the only child and heiress of a Southern millionaire, the reigning beauty and belle of the city. No queen on her throne could receive the homage of her subjects more proudly than did Alma Vernon; and, truly, no queen could look more regal than she. I close my eyes and see her now standing before me, as I did the first night we met; her gorgeous robe of purple velvet sweeping the carpet with its rich folds; her diamond necklace and cross flowing in a blaze of light around her snowy neck, and flashing like imprisoned sunbeams from her ears and on her fingers. A glittering circlet of gems enclasped her long, silky, jet-black tresses, that would persist in coquettishly breaking from their imprisonment, and flow in long spiral ringlets on her neck.

I think she was the proudest girl I ever knew. How gloriously her splendid Oriental eyes would kindle, and her beautiful lip curl sarcastically, as she listened with scornful indifference to the prettily-turned compliments ever poured in her ear by her admiring train of followers.

I used to stand in some distant corner and watch her for hours together with a sort of subdued rapture; she evinced over me a sort of strange fascination, for which I cannot account. Of me, she never took any notice. I was too small and insignificant; I was only one among the countless numbers who regarded her as a being belonging to a higher sphere.

Among the most devoted of her followers there was one, a dashing young officer, the handsomest man I have ever seen. Captain Travers seemed in every way fitted for the peerless "Flower of the South," as she was called. Rich, handsome, distingue, of an old and aristocratic family, there seemed nothing likely to impede the course of his wooing; and the world was not surprised when it was announced that Captain Travers and the "Flower of the South" were engaged.

About this time, matters over which I had no control rendered it necessary I should leave home for another land. I departed in the hope of speedily returning again to witness the nuptials that were soon to take place. But fate ordered it otherwise; and three years elapsed ere I again set foot on my native

shore. My first inquiry was for my old friends, and among the rest for Alma Vernon; but, to my surprise, no one knew anything of her. She had left the city shortly after my departure, accompanied by Captain Travers, and since then had not been heard of. All my endeavors to learn further were in vain. I could hear nothing more of her.

One day I repaired to the house occupied by the Sisters of Charity, being anxious to place a poor, friendless orphan under the charge of the good Sisters. My business concluded, I arose to go, when the Superior, noticing the curiosity with which I eyed the chapel—which I could see from the parlor where we were—said:

"Perhaps, miss, you would like to see the chapel? If so, vespers will commence presently, and we will be happy to have you remain."

Having eagerly signified the pleasure it would give me to do so, I followed the nun to the chapel. The profound stillness that reigned here, the perfume of the flowers with which it was adorned, the beautiful pictures and statues around, made the place seem very lovely indeed. Involuntarily I fell to speculating on the lives the nuns must lead, and wondering if being confined here was not terribly irksome, when a lay sister entered to light the candles on the altar—as Catholics always do before service. In a few moments after, the nuns entered in procession, two by two, and noiselessly took their places. Suddenly I started; I almost exclaimed aloud, as, amid the numerous black-robed figures that glided past me, I beheld the tall, graceful form and beautiful face of the "Flower of the South," Alma Vernon!

Like one in a dream, I saw her take her place at the organ to sing vespers. For a moment I fancied my eyes were deceiving me. Alma Vernon—the heiress, the beauty, and belle—a nun! The thought was bewildering, and yet she it was! There could be no mistaking that pale, but still exquisitely lovely face—lovelier I fancied, than I had ever seen it before; for the old scornful, sarcastic look of pride was gone, leaving in its place one of calm, earnest, heartfelt peace, which cannot be described, but which those who have seen nuns can understand. Yes, there she stood: the velvet robes exchanged for her black nun's dress; her diamonds gone, and in their place a rosary and crucifix; the long, silken curls shorn off, and their place supplied by her long black veil—the badge of her eternal separation from the world.

There was something, I thought, almost seraphic in her face, as with the others she chanted the "Evening Hymn to the Virgin." When the vespers concluded, she flitted past like a shadow among the rest, and disappeared.

It was one of the lay sisters who came to show me out, so there was no opportunity of having my curiosity concerning her gratified. I stepped out, the heavy door closed behind me, and I shuddered as I heard it—it seemed so like shutting in those fair young nuns in a living tomb.

I visited the convent many times after that, but still no opportunity occurred of my seeing Alma Vernon again. I shrank from asking the Superior—might she not think it impertinent curiosity?—and I knew not the name she went by among the Sisters, so I could not ask to see herself. And even if I had known it, what motive could I say prompted me to ask for her? I had no doubt she had forgotten me long ago. So weeks passed on, and my curiosity was still unsatisfied. Where was Captain Travers? Why had those two, who seemed formed for each other, parted? Why had she become a Catholic? I wondered and wondered, and worked in my own mind a romance concerning them, but still the wish to hear the story haunted me night and day.

One evening as I, with some friends, was out driving, a sudden storm of thunder and lightning arose, with such violence that our horses took to flight, and all our efforts to restrain them were in vain. On, on they went, dashing madly through the crowded streets, while the appalled crowd strove to check them in vain. I closed my eyes, expecting instant death, when suddenly a cloak was thrown over the heads of the furious animals, a powerful hand grasped the reins, and we were safe. A loud shout from the crowd followed the deed, and numberless hands were still outstretched to restrain the still restive horses. I ventured to look up to thank our deliverer, but he cut me short by lifting his hat and disappearing among the crowd. Somewhat chagrined by the indifferent way in which he had treated the pretty speech I was about to make, I turned to one of the bystanders and inquired who he was.

"A Catholic priest," was the reply. "He was just leaving yonder cottage, where there is a sick woman, when your carriage came dashing down the street. Quick as lightning he sprang forward and threw his cloak over the horses' heads, and so saved your life."

"You had better go into one of those cottages for a few moments," said a gentleman of our party, approaching me. "The shaft has been broken, and must be repaired before we can go any farther."

I sprang to the ground, and, making my way through the crowd, approached one of the humble-looking cottages and entered. It was a wretched, squalid place, totally devoid of furniture, and rendered almost unendurable by the dense smoke with which it was filled, that came from the black, smoldering fire in the hearth. Two or three dirty, half-naked children sat cowering over the miserable fire, striving in vain to warm their chilled limbs. But my attention was soon drawn from them to another sight. In the farthest corner, stretched on a heap of straw, and covered only by a single ragged quilt, lay the worn and wasted form of a woman, whose livid face, purple lips, and glaring eyes betokened the rapid approach of death. Kneeling by her side, and holding one of the dying woman's hands in hers, was a Sister of Charity. In her other hand she held a prayer-book, from which she read, in a low, sweet, soothing voice, the touching prayers for the dying. I approached softly on tiptoe, and, with a feeling of awe, such as the presence of death can never fail to awaken, I knelt down. As I did so, I caught sight of the nun's face, and beheld for the second time the beautiful features of Alma Vernon. I cannot describe the feeling that stole over me as I recognized her. She, the once flattered heiress and belle, the sole attendant of a poor, wretched pauper—she, who had lived all her life in the grandest and most aristocratic of mansions, kneeling now in this wretched hovel alone. Surely some motive higher and nobler than any other earthly consideration must have induced her to leave riches, and comforts, and all the pleasures that wealth and beauty can bring, to become a servant of servants, to become the attendant of paupers, forgotten and despised by all the rest of the world—to become, in a word, a Sister of Charity. I had always looked upon nuns as degraded beings, sunk in superstition, and blinded by fanaticism; but in this moment some of my old prejudices were swept away. Alma Vernon, enlightened and accomplished, surely could not be a victim of priestcraft; and yet, the old romance came again before me, how had she left the world? Had she married Captain Travers? What had become of him—so young, so noble, so handsome? How many heartaches those two must have suffered before they parted! What would I not give to know the whole story?

Lost in my own reflections, I almost forgot where I was, until a noise that made my blood run cold smote upon my ear. It was what is called the death-rattle—the sure forerunner that life is going. I looked up; the woman lay back on the pillow, her features already growing rigid in death, while the nun clasped her hands and exclaimed fervently: "May God have mercy on her soul!"

For a few moments she remained absorbed in profound prayer, while her beautiful face wore a look of such rapt devotion that she resembled an angel. I scarcely dared to breathe, until at length the nun arose, and, turning round, beheld me. A slight bow was the only notice she took of me; and she began to compose the limbs of the dead woman in the attire of the grave. She then whispered to the elder of the children, who went out, and reappeared with two or three women from the adjoining cottages. Very profound and respectful was their courtesy to the Sister, who gave them a few directions in a low tone, and then, approaching the little porch where I stood, she held out her hand, saying, with a smile inexpressibly sweet:

"We are old friends, I believe. I saw you that day at vespers; and the little orphan Ellen, whom you brought us, is never done speaking of you. So, you see, I am well acquainted with you."

"I believe I have a still stronger claim to your friendship," said I, raising her hand to my lips. "Long ago I knew you as Miss Vernon, though I know not now whether to address you by that name or Mrs. Travers." She grew very pale, and drew her hand away, while she said, hurriedly:

"As neither—as neither! To one I have no right, the other I have left behind me in the world, together with all the empty vanities that were mine when

I bore it. I am now Sister Mary Teresa. But you—who are you?"

"Don't you remember a little awkward country girl, who used to follow you like a shadow?" said I, laughing.

"Little Susie! Oh, I remember her perfectly! And are you that little thing? How you have grown!"

"Yes; I have shot up wonderfully these last three years," said I. "And you—you have changed greatly, too."

She sighed first, then smiled.

"Yes, I have grown old and worn-out. Did you recognize me that day in the chapel?"

"Recognize you! Oh, of course I did! Though I could scarcely believe my senses."

"I suppose you hardly expected to see Alma Vernon, the most worldly and thoughtless of girls, in a veiled nun," said the Sister.

"Indeed, I did not. Ah! Miss Vernon, what could have ever induced you to leave the world for a convent!" I exclaimed, earnestly.

"Not that name—call me Sister," she said, with a slightly impatient movement. "And so you would like to hear my story, Susie?"

"Oh, indeed, I would, Sister Teresa!" said I, eagerly. "Do tell me why you left all the numberless pleasures that were yours for a gloomy convent. And Captain Travers—where is he?"

Her voice faltered a little, but she answered, calmly, "He is dead!"

I was shocked, the announcement came so suddenly and unexpectedly. I had seen him last full of life and radiant with beauty, glowing with hope and light-heartedness; and now—I raised my eyes to the still lovely face of the nun, who stood with her large, dark eyes fixed on the floor, while the nervous twitching of her mouth betrayed that the old memories had again risen before her with saddening power.

"And this is why you became a nun," said I, at length.

"Partly; but I have not time to tell you now. Come to the convent some day, and I will tell you all. Perhaps the story may do you good. I must go now. Good-by."

She pressed my hand, and, drawing her thick veil over her face, she hurried away, and was soon out of sight.

I went several times after that to the convent, but some weeks passed ere I found an opportunity of hearing Sister Teresa's story. At length, one day, she came to meet me in the parlor, and without preface began her story:

"Shortly after you left the city I started for New Orleans, my birthplace, accompanied by papa, Captain Travers and my cousin Lulu. As you know, we were engaged to be married in a few weeks, but I, ever whimsical and capricious, and taking a strange delight in tormenting others, suddenly changed my mind, and positively refused to fulfill my engagement until we had made a tour through Europe. Captain Travers and the others rebelled, but the more they urged me the more determined I became, and at last, much against their will, they consented. There were a large number of passengers on board, and I soon made many acquaintances, and resumed my old business of flirting, with the amiable design of making Travers jealous. In this I succeeded to perfection. He grew morose and sullen, scarcely ever speaking to any one; but I kept on in my mad career, not caring a straw for him or his jealousy — for I had never really loved him as a woman should the man she intended to marry. I liked him well enough; he was rich and handsome, and polite—and that was all I fancied any one wanted in a husband; and as for sacrificing any whim of my own to please him, I had no idea of it.

"Still, there were times when I did not flirt; when I was as quiet and subdued as even Captain Travers could wish. This was when conversing with one of the passengers, a Catholic priest.

At first, when I met him, I took him to be a professor, in his plain black suit. Had I then known what he really was, I would have shrunk from him as from an Eastern leper. But I did not know; and there was a strange charm in his discourse that often drew me to his side. One day he accidentally mentioned who he was, and, to my own surprise, I found myself listening without the horror I once thought I would have felt at meeting a priest. From that day I sought Father John — as he called himself — continually. It was such a relief—after listening to the tawdry compliments and insipid nothings of the brainless fops that hovered around me—to hear Father John's grave, earnest, but gentle words. By degrees, partly to pass the time at first, I began to question him concerning his religion; and became so enraptured with his explanations that,

before our arrival in England, I became an enthusiastic convert to his faith. For a few weeks I managed to keep my change of religion a secret from the rest of the family; for I had not courage to brave the storm of anger which I feared would follow its avowal. But they soon learned it; and then my father stormed and raved, Captain Travers absolutely entreated me on his knees, Lulu wept and implored; but all was in vain. I remained firm. Seeing I was not to be moved, my father at last sternly bade me to leave his house. With a heavy heart, indeed, I left my home—the last words I heard from Captain Travers being a terrible oath that he would be revenged on the wily Jesuit who had weaned me from the faith of my fathers. I sought and found a home with the Sisters of Charity, and for a while heard nothing of the others; until one day I read in the paper that "Richard Vernon, Esq., and his niece had left in the Water Witch for New Orleans." I had not expected my fault would be so severely punished. I never dreamed for a moment they would have left me alone in a strange land; and for a while I was inconsolable. But the kindness and affection of the good Sisters somewhat consoled me; and at length I grew, if not happy, at least content. Of Frederick Travers I had never heard since the day we parted.

"One evening I repaired to a neighboring cathedral, and, feeling a delicious pleasure in the holy quiet of the place, I did not leave until near dark. As I went out, I overtook Father John, and, wishing to consult him about something, we walked on together. Suddenly, there was the report of a pistol behind us. With a groan, Father John fell at my feet, weltering in blood. My piercing shrieks soon collected a crowd, and the assassin, who had turned to fly, was soon captured. As he was led past, I looked up, and, to my unspeakable horror, recognized Captain Travers.

"Father John was borne to a neighboring house and a surgeon sent for—who, to the great joy of all, pronounced the wound dangerous, but not mortal. The constant care and attention of the good people of the house soon restored him to health once more. The trial of the assassin came on; but, as Father John refused to appear against him, he was discharged, and, as it was reported, quitted England immediately for his native land.

"Three months more passed away, and I still remained with the good Sisters of Charity. I had not taken the veil, but I often assisted the nuns in tending the hospital patients and visiting the sick.

"One night a man was brought to the hospital horribly mutilated and in a dying state. He had been engaged in a brawl in a gambling saloon, and was stabbed by his adversary. Some charitable persons brought him to the hospital, but it was too late. Every breath pumped the life-blood from a ghastly wound in his head. I knelt by his side to wipe the clotted gore from his face. He slowly opened his glazing eyes and fixed them with a wild, maniacal glare on my face. Suddenly he raised himself, with a last convulsive effort, on his elbow and shrieked, 'Alma!' Then, with a choking gasp for breath, he fell back, dead. But I had recognized him. It was Frederick Travers."

The nun covered her face with her hands, while her slight figure quivered convulsively at the remembrance of that terrible scene. Then, lifting her pale face, she went on hurriedly:

"There is but little more to tell. They buried him in a little English churchyard, and I—I became a Sister of Charity. My father died a year ago, leaving all his wealth to Lulu. May heaven grant her a long and happy life to enjoy it!"

"And oh, Sister, can you be happy here, always by the loathsome bedside of dying paupers, leading this self-sacrificing, this laborious life?" I cried out.

"Yes, my dear, I am happy; for I know I am doing my duty," she answered, earnestly.

"And Father John?" I inquired, after a pause.

"Saved your life just now, my dear," she answered, smiling.

She stooped to kiss me. The next moment she was gone. We have never met since.

CARRIE'S BRIDAL.

By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING,

Author of "A Wonderful Woman," "A Terrible Secret," "The Mystery at Blackwood Grange," "Sir Noel's Heir," Etc., Etc.

A sweet, pretty little girl was Carrie Fay. None of your wonderful beauties, you know, so transcendently lovely that all creation falls in love with them at first sight, but a pretty little thing, with merry, blue eyes and wavy brown hair and rose-tinted cheeks, and red, laughing lips, and the dearest, prettiest little form ever you saw in your life. Then Carrie had such winning ways, such sweet smiles and gentle words for every one, except her beaux, that it is no wonder she was the prime favorite of everybody in Ashfield. She was especially fond of old men and women—so fond, in fact, that half the claimants for her hand could have strangled all the old people in the village from sheer jealousy.

Carrie, of course, had plenty of lovers kneeling at her feet and vowing everlasting fidelity, while she laughed in their face. The house of Deacon Fay was besieged by wearers of broadcloth from morning till night, to the great annoyance of that orthodox pillar of the church. But, seeing that Carrie laughed at them all alike, and seemed to have no intention of falling in love with any of them, the worthy deacon made up his mind that for the present at least he would "grin and bear it."

Carrie and I were fast friends. We had gone to school together when children, played truant together, and got punished together — except, sometimes, when my brother Hugh, by some plausible story, got us off, or took our punishment on himself. And on these occasions Carrie would throw her arms around his neck with her usual impulsiveness and exclaim:

"Oh, Hugh, you're such a good boy, and I do love you more than anybody else in the world!"

Hugh, however, who had a true boyish dislike of caresses, would disengage himself and push her away with a gruff:

"Bother!"

But the Fates had ordained that we should part. I was sent to a French academy to be "finished," Hugh obtained a midshipman's appointment, and Carrie remained in Ashfield. Five years passed ere we met again, and now behold me lying on a sofa in Carrie's room, caressing a hideously ugly little terrier, while his mistress sits before me recounting her adventures since we parted last.

"And so you haven't got married yet, Sue?" said Carrie. "I expected you would have been Mrs. Somebody-or-other long before this, and here you come back a dashing city girl, it is true, but plain Susie Ford after all!"

"Nothing wonderful in that, my dear. There never was a man born yet half good enough for me. I intend to be an independent old maid, and when I die I'll leave my money to found a hospital for superannuated dogs and cats. I'm fond of puppies of all sorts, except those running on two legs."

"Sour grapes, Sue, nothing else; somebody's jilted you, and, for spite, you rail against the whole sex. Come, now, confess; you've been in love and"—

"Never, as I am a sinner! I scorn the accusation. But you, with more beaux than I could shake a stick at, why ain't you a 'blessed bride,' eh?"

"Oh, well, because I don't want to be married—at least, not yet. I think it's horrid. And the men—well, I declare, of all the silly looking creatures imaginable, a man in love is the most intolerable. There was Captain Lucas, now; I thought him a splendid fellow before I got acquainted with him—so grave and stately, and dignified, and all that. Well, I got an introduction to him and for a

while we got along swimmingly together; but at last he took it into his head to fall in love with me. I never suspected such a catastrophe at all, until one night he knelt down at my feet and began telling me I was an 'adorable creature,' and, just at that moment, his pants succumbed to the pressure of his knees. I burst out in laughter, and the stately captain, springing to his feet and casting one look of horror at his ruined unmentionables, fled from the spot, and I have never seen him since.

"Then there was Dr. Stuart, the handsomest man of my acquaintance, who went to 'pop the question' and got dreadfully confused, stuttered and stammered, and blushed red and purple and white, and all the colors of the rainbow. Actually, the bewildering doctor was trembling and blushing before poor little me. Now, I don't mind a girl's blushing now and then. I rather like it than otherwise; but to see a man—a lord of creation—as red in the face as a boiled lobster, all his dignity oozing out of the toes of his boots, and looking like somebody about to be hanged for sheep stealing—oh, horror! I was disenchanted on the spot, and never could bear the sight of the doctor since.

"Then there was Mr. Adolphus Persimmon Byron, a literary character, who wrote pathetic love tales and melancholy verses for the Ashfield Lightning Bug. He used to come here rainy days and bring his pathetic poems with him and read them aloud to me. I was always glad to see him, I'm sure, for he regularly set me sound asleep before he got to the end of the second verse, which was just what I wanted. I had no idea he'd ever fall in love with me, poor thing! or I'd have told him beforehand it was a waste of ammunition. But one day he handed me a copy of verses, and, with tears in his eyes, implored me to read it and answer favorably. It was a heart-rending proposal of his heart and hand and fortune, the last item being invested in a railway near the North Pole, in a region yet to be discovered. There were most awful, terrifying hints of arsenic, ratbane and drowning if I refused; but refuse I did, in elegant verse, of which the following is a copy:

"'Your heart, your hand and your fortune you offer—
And truly, dear sir, 'tis a generous proffer;
But as I can't think to deprive you of all,
I'll take the last-mentioned, though I fear it's but small.
So send on your fortune without more delay—
It will ne'er be refused by your friend,
"'CARRIE FAY.'"

"Oh! stop! stop! you wicked little flirt! Do you really mean to tell me that you have become such a wicked trifler with the gentlemen's hearts?"

"Gentlemen's hearts! Come, I like that! As if anything encased in broadcloth ever had a heart. No, my dear, there is nothing but a cavity filled full of vanity, somewhere under their watch pocket, in the place where the heart ought to be. Bless you! it does them good to take the conceit out of 'em. I believe I was made for the salvation of them all."

"Come, now, Carrie, be sensible; among all your suitors is there not one whose affection you return?"

"Not one, 'pon honor! I wouldn't give two straws for the whole blessed lot of them."

"And you were never in love?"

"Never. Oh, I mean since your brother Hugh left me to wear the willow. You know how zealously I paid my distresses to him, and how ungratefully he rejected them. Even when he went away his 'last speech and confession' was adding insult to injury. There I was, with my arms round his neck, hugging and clinging to him like a chestnut burr, and crying till you couldn't see an eye in my head. And what do you think was his return? Why, he pushed me away and told me to 'go off and not make such a little goose of myself,' and there he left me whimpering on the ground."

"The hard-hearted monster!" I replied, unable to repress a laugh at Carrie's dolorous look and tone. "Well, he'll be here in a week or two, I expect, and you will have a chance of making him apologize for his rudeness."

"Oh, is he coming home?" cried Carrie, clapping her hands. "How glad I am! Won't I fix him, though? I perfectly dote on sailors—especially midshipmen."

I left Carrie and walked slowly homeward, thinking about nothing in particular, according to my usual habit, when, just as I entered the door of my residence, I was confronted by an individual six feet high, dressed in "gorgeous array," and glittering with brass buttons. I felt sure I had seen that hand-

some face and those wicked black eyes and glossy dark locks somewhere before, but ere I could call memory to my aid, I was clasped in his arms, while he eagerly exclaimed:

"Susie, Susie, little sister, don't you know me?"

"Why, Hugh! my goodness, Hugh; can this be you? I'm so glad!" I exclaimed, in delighted surprise.

"Yes, this is me, nobody else. Hugh Ford, Esq., U. S. N., past midshipman," was his concise and descriptive answer.

"Why, how tall you are, and how handsome you've grown," said I, holding him off and surveying him with admiration, "and what a splendid mustache you've got."

"Wish I could return the compliment, sis."

"When did you come?"

"About an hour ago. They told me you were somewhere in the village, and I was about to go cruising in search of you, when you dropped in."

"Yes. I was up with Carrie Fay. You remember little Carrie, don't you?"

"What! The little girl with the blue eyes and yellow hair, who used to be so fond of me? I should think I did. She used to half-strangle me with her caresses," he replied, coolly, stretching himself indolently on a lounge.

"Take care the tables are not turned, Master Hugh. Carrie is one of the prettiest girls in Ashfield, which is noted far and near for its pretty girls."

"Then, in that case, she may be as fond of me now as she pleases, and caress me whenever she likes. I won't oppose it in the least."

"You incorrigibly vain wretch. If you had heard her a while ago it would have taken the nonsense out of you. We were speaking of you, you know."

"Yes; good, no doubt."

"No, indeed, we wer'n't. You don't catch Carrie speaking well of you," said I, thinking, inwardly, if she admired cool impudence she would likely take a desperate fancy to him pretty soon.

Late that evening I went over to see her, and, without telling her of Hugh's arrival, asked her to come home with me.

We walked across the fields together, Carrie drawing on her gloves and chatting gaily. Suddenly, in the middle of an animated speech, she gave her kid glove a desperate pull and tore it in pieces.

"There, now, look at that!" she exclaimed, ruefully. "I paid a dollar and a half for these yesterday. I wish to goodness I had a chance to kiss somebody and so get a new pair."

"Why, how would that get you a new pair?" said I.

"What a piece of simplicity you are! Do you not know, if you kiss a sleeping gentleman, without his knowledge, you'll get a pair of new gloves? The first chance I get I'm going to try it."

As she spoke I opened the parlor door and entered. The room was darkened to exclude the heat; and there, on the sofa, lay Hugh, as sound asleep as though I had not seen him with his eyes wide open when we first entered.

"There's a chance for you, then," said I, pointing to the sleeper.

"Who is it?" said Carrie, who, on entering the darkened room, could not distinguish objects very clearly; "your Uncle John?"

"Who else would it be?" said I, evasively.

"Then here goes!" exclaimed Carrie, in a tone of suppressed delight, as she tip-toed forward, and, stooping over the sleeper, imprinted a kiss on his forehead.

In a moment she was encircled by a strong arm, and her salute returned with compound interest by some one who was not Uncle John. Surprise at first held her spell-bound; then recognizing her former playmate in the dashing midshipman, she broke from his arms and fled, like a startled deer, from the room.

Suppressing my laughter, I followed her, and found her sitting at the foot of the garden, with her face hidden in her hands.

"Come, Carrie," said I, gaily, "you shall have the gloves, though you did kiss the nephew instead of the uncle. Mistakes will happen in the best of families, you know."

She raised her head and laughed, though her cheek was deep crimson.

"It was too bad of you to deceive me so, Susie. What will he think of me? Oh, Susie, what will he think of me?" she said, earnestly clasping her hands.

I burst out laughing.

"Why, he'll be very much disappointed when he finds your affectionate embrace was not intended for him. But here he comes to plead his own cause, and, as he doesn't need any assistant counsel, I'll vanish."

Carrie started in alarm to her feet, with the intention of following my example, but Hugh was by her side, making ten thousand apologies for taking advantage of her mistake.

I left them to settle the matter themselves and sauntered off, humming to myself and gathering cinnamon roses. I think she forgave him, for, two hours afterward, when he escorted her home, they were laughing and chatting as merrily as though that unlucky blunder had never occurred.

The next day I explained the matter to Hugh, who charitably wished Carrie might tear her glove and make a similar mistake every day. That evening a pair of tiny lavender-hued gloves found their way to the deacon's, accompanied by a beautiful bouquet.

Hugh had received long leave of absence, and he certainly improved it by devoting all his time to Carrie Fay. Three weeks passed, and, in spite of all my entreaties to go and see the rest of the family at Cape May, where mamma and the girls were spending the dog-days, he still lingered, rusticating at Ashfield.

"Now, Hugh, look here," said I, one morning, "here's this letter from mamma, and listen to what she says:

"'What on earth is the matter with Hugh, my love? Is he bewitched or what attractions can there be for him in a hum-drum country village to detain him from us? Tell him to come immediately here—command him. Your sisters, Maud and Eva, are quite as anxious to see him as I am. Miss Rich, the old millionaire's daughter, is here. She is enormously wealthy, and used to admire Hugh very much as a boy. If he plays his cards well he may have the richest bride in the United States. Tell him to make all possible haste. Miss Rich begs to be remembered to him.' ".

"Miss Rich be — hanged!" exclaimed Mr. Hugh, in a passion. "I wish my mother would not take upon herself the odious character of matchmaker. I won't go."

"You will go, Hugh," said I, firmly. "You must go. No, never flash up so haughtily at that word; just listen patiently for a moment. Tell me, what is it keeps you here?"

His dark cheek flushed, but he laughed and answered carelessly:

"Why, my winsome little sister, to be sure," he said, twining my curls over his fingers.

"Don't talk nonsense, Hugh! What would mamma and the girls say if they knew you stayed here making love to a little country girl, with two or three thousand dollars for her fortune?"

"Making love! Don't be a fool, Susie!" he exclaimed, almost angrily, getting up and pacing the floor.

"Very well, sir; perhaps you are quite innocent, but your long moonlight walks and your morning rides and afternoon sails look most suspiciously like it. Now go to Cape May and pay your respects to mamma, and if you find my presence here a stronger attraction than Miss Rich's dollars and dimes, why, come back to me—that's all."

He left the room without making any reply, and I saw him go toward Deacon Fay's house. Two hours after he returned, bade us all a hasty good-by, vaulted into the saddle and quitted Ashfield.

That evening I went over to see Carrie. She was sitting watching the moon rising over the tops, with a sad, dreamy look on her fair face. Her parents were present, and so was a short, fat, pompous-looking old man, whom the deacon presented to me as Mr. Rich, whose daughter mamma wished Hugh to marry.

I stayed with Carrie all the evening, but she did not once mention Hugh's name. Old Mr. Rich seemed struck by her beauty, and announced his intention of spending the remainder of the week with them.

That week passed and the next, and still he remained; and the people whispered in the village that there would soon be a wedding at the deacon's. I had heard nothing from Hugh since his departure; but, in a dainty note, my fashionable sister, Eva, gave me to understand that he was decidedly the handsomest man at Cape May, and regarded with favorable eyes by the "beauty and heiress," Miss Rich.

One evening, as I entered the porch of Deacon Fay's house, I heard his voice in loud and angry tones. Ere I could retreat the following words met my ear:

"I tell you, Carrie Fay, I'll have none of your nonsense. Old, forsooth! as if that made any matter. You must and shall marry him — mind that! When young Ford was here I let him spark around, thinking he would marry you; but now he's off with his fashionable

family at some watering place, and going to be married to some great lady. So, no more whimpering. I trust I know my duty well enough to provide for my daughter. So prepare for your wedding as soon as you like."

I fled from the house just in time to avoid meeting the deacon, who came stalking out, with a look of grim determination on his face.

The next day, as I sat alone, a letter was brought me in the handwriting of Eva. I tore it open and read:

"DEAR SUE: Hugh is married at last. He and Seline Rich were united this morning, and everything went off splendidly. All the world was here to witness the nuptials, and everybody says they never saw so magnificent an affair. Celine has heard some absurd report that her father is going to marry a country girl in Ashfield; but, of course, it cannot be true. She insists, however, on going there to see; so you will soon have an opportunity of beholding your new sister. EVA."

The letter fell from my hand and I dropped my head on the table with a groan. A touch on the shoulder startled me. I looked up and beheld Carrie, but so pale and wild that I scarcely knew her.

"Susie," she said, "read that."

I took the newspaper she held and saw in flourishing capitals the announcement of the marriage of Hugh Ford and Celine Rich.

"Oh, Susie," she cried, passionately, "is it true?"

"Yes," I said, briefly.

"Then God help me!"

There was such utter despair in her voice that I was startled. Her face was deadly white, even to her lips, and such a look of deep, settled anguish I never saw in human eyes before.

"Dear Carrie," said I, gently, "what is it? Did you love him?"

"Oh, Hugh! Hugh!"

That wild, mournful cry answered me. I passed my arms around her waist and would have drawn her down beside me, but she gently released herself, and, covering her face with her hands, stood for a time silent and motionless. Then looking up, she said, hurriedly:

"Susie, I am to be married the day after to-morrow. Will you be my bridesmaid?"

I stared at her in amazement.

"Married! To whom?"

"To Mr. Rich," she said, with a sort of shudder.

"That old man! Oh, Carrie!" I said, reproachfully.

"Hush! Oh, hush, Susie, I must!" she cried, wildly. "Do not talk to me now. I cannot bear it. Oh, they have all talked to me too much. I am going crazy, I think. Susie, you will come?"

"Since you wish it, Carrie—yes."

She smiled faintly, as if to thank me, and slowly left the house.

I did not see her again until the wedding morning. She was in her room and would see no one—not even me; but that morning she came down like a spirit among the guests, all in white, and with a face more deathly pale than any bride ever was before.

"I am tired, take me up stairs," she said to me, faintly, when the ceremony was over. I looked and was unspeakably shocked to see the light had died out of her eyes, the bright golden hue seemed even to have faded from her hair.

Supporting her with my arm, I led her to her room. She seated herself by the table, and, leaning her arm upon it, her head dropped heavily down.

Just at that moment the sound of carriage wheels arrested my attention. I ran down stairs, and there in the parlor stood Hugh and his bride.

Proud man as he was, he actually quailed before the look I gave him. His wife was talking in loud and angry tones to her father.

"Where is this girl you have married?" she said, in no very gentle voice. "I must see her."

"She is up stairs, madam," said I, coldly; "but I do not think she is able to come down."

"Then I shall go up. Come with me, Mr. Ford," she said, passing her arm through his and turning to follow me.

We ascended the stairs. Carrie still sat motionless by the table, her head resting on her folded arms. I stooped over her and whispered her name, but she did not stir.

"Carrie," said I, shaking her gently, "Hugh is here."

Had she been dying that name would have recalled her to life; but now it fell unheeded.

With a wild, vague fear I raised her head. The golden-brown hair fell heavily over my arm, the lids were closed over the weary blue eyes, a smile still

lingered on the sweet, beautiful lips, and on her bridal day her aching heart had found rest.

I laid her down, and, waving them back, I turned sternly to Celine.

"You are too late, madam," I said, bitterly; "Your reproaches will fall unheeded now. Carrie Fay is beyond your power."

"Dead!" she exclaimed, with a shriek. "Dear me, how shocking! Do take me down stairs, Mr. Ford. I feel as though I should faint."

"Disease of the heart," the doctors said, as they bent over the lifeless form.

Down in the village churchyard, where the sunshine falls brightly and the sweet south wind comes loaded with the odor of cinnamon roses, they laid Carrie. No cold, white monument marks her resting place, but a majestic willow sighs mournfully above it, and drops tears upon the roses through the long nights. And in the hush of midnight the tall, dark form of a man comes here to wrestle with his remorse and anguish, that the world dreams not he has ever felt, for

"The dark eyes, dim with weeping,
Sparkle 'mid the crowd again."

And to-night, listening to the bitter autumn storm, I cannot rest, for my thoughts are with the lonely sleeper in the cold churchyard.

Mr. Mounterville.

By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING,

Author of "A Wonderful Woman," "A Terrible Secret," "The Mystery at Blackwood Grange," "Sir Noel's Heir," Etc., Etc.

His name was Mounterville — John Frederick Mounterville. That sounds romantic, doesn't it? like the hero of a high-pressure novel, you know, but for all that he wasn't a bit romantic. Fancy thirty-five years, five feet six, two hundred pounds weight, a florid complexion, and sandy whiskers, and point out the romance, if you dare. That was Mr. J. F. Mounterville; and he kept the large grocery store up the village, and sold kerosene, and hog's-lard, and pork, and butter and molasses; and if there's anything romantic or sentimental in all that, I shall be happy to have you tell me of it. How he ever came to be Mounterville, the gods above only know. If ever Smith—Peter or Samuel—was written in a "human face divine," it was in Mr. Mounterville's. But for all that it was his name, real and bona fide, and had been his father's and grandfather's before him, and was likely to be his son's, if he ever got that far, for Mr. John Frederick Mounterville, grocer, was a bachelor. And that is how I come to be writing about him to-day; for, of all the odd things that ever happened, the oddest was that this man should go and fall in love with me.

You see, ma—ma's a widow, and I'm her only one, and we keep the village school. Ma used to send me to the grocery store for butter, and sugar, and tea, and coffee of every-day life, and Mr. Mounterville used to wait on me a good deal, and make pleasing little remarks about the weather, and the prices-current, and our school, and things generally. I didn't notice it myself, at first, that there was any display of the tender passion in all this, for one would as soon have thought of a kangaroo in love as Mr. Mounterville; but Phil Marks, one of the clerks, got into a way of grinning knowingly whenever I appeared, and dodging off to wait on some other customer, and leaving me to "the boss." And then, by-and-by, in a sheepish and shame-faced sort of way, Mr. Mounterville took to making me presents. Not bouquets of hothouse exotics, or Tennyson in gold and azure, or illuminated sheets of music, but nice little cakes of cheese, and pounds of roll butter, and drums of figs, and bottles of pickles, and such like, until gradually my eyes began to open to the truth, and I realized the staggering fact that my black eyes and raven tresses had wrought havoc inside Mr. Mounterville's capacious vest.

When the thrilling conviction first dawned upon me I stood stunned, speechless, for about ten minutes and a half. Then I sat down in the nearest chair, and laid my head back, and laughed, and laughed, and laughed, and laughed, until ma came running up, and stood before me, with tears in her eyes, and the camphor bottle in her hand, thinking it was hysterics.

"Go away, ma," I said, as soon as I could speak, "it isn't that—I mean hysterics; it's Mr. Mounterville."

"Mr. Mounterville! Whatever has Mr. Mounterville done?"

"Nothing much, only—oh! good gracious!"—another paroxysm—"only, ma, can't you see through the little cheeses, and rolls of butter, and figs, and sausages, yet?"

"See through them, Lucinda? What do you mean?"

"Mean! Why, ma, look here; a bat might see it — Mr. Mounterville's in love!"

"What! Lucinda, my child," with a look of horror, "you never mean to say the unhappy man has fallen in love with me?"

"No, ma; not with you — only with me."

"Lucinda!"

"It's true, ma; it has rushed upon me all at once, like an Alpine avalanche! Cheeses and sausages are Mr. Mounterville's way of breathing his soul's deepest feelings. I know what Phil Marks's grins mean now; and I've only to say the word and I'm certain to change the plebeian name of Thompson for the high-sounding cognomen of Mounterville—Mrs. John Frederick Mounterville; it's lovely, isn't it?"

"My dear," said ma, thoughtfully, "you might do worse."

"Yes, die an old maid—the most horrible of all earthly dooms. And I was twenty-seven last birthday; and when a lovely female comes to be twenty-seven it's time she ceased to be particular. Well, ma, I'll think about it."

And I did. I went slowly and thoughtfully up stairs to my own room, and sat down by the window to turn it over. Mr. Mounterville was rich; selling lard and molasses may not be romantic, but it's remunerative—and Mr. Mounterville had made money out of it. He lived in a handsome white wooden mansion up the village; he kept a horse and buggy in summer, and a horse and sleigh in winter, and a cook, and a housemaid, and a boy, and two clerks. Could any right-thinking schoolmistress of seven-and-twenty-odd long for more? Surely my lucky star had ridden high in the heavens the day Mr. Mounterville first cast upon me the eye of desire. Yet, oh, my prophetic soul! was this what the dreams of my youth had come to! I, who had once reveled in the gorgeous delusion of wedding a Count Lara, a corsair, a giaour, a veiled prophet! Had not my ideal, all my days, been of a grand, unapproachable creature, with swarthy skin, and ferocious whiskers, and a cimetar by his side? A man who would

"Leave a Corsair's name to other times,
Linked with one virtue and a thousand crimes."

And here I had fallen into this! Come to think over a two-hundred-pound grocer, with sandy sidewhiskers, and eyes like pinholes, as a very desirable match indeed.

Nine o'clock struck, school came in, and I twitched my collar and apron straight, glanced at my black eyes that had done such execution, and descended to teach the young idea how to shoot. But I was in a state of pensive abstraction all day, and set sums, and wrote copies, and slapped little girls and boys, in a frame of pleasing melancholy, with my thoughts on the white wooden mansion up the village, and the cook, and the sleigh, and the chambermaid, and the buggy, and piles and piles of new dresses. Before I dismissed the forty cherubs on my roll call (fond of crying as the other cherubim), I had made up my mind, with a gentle sigh, to bury in oblivion the image of my Paynim hero, and accept Mr. Mounterville as soon as he should screw his courage to the sticking point and propose.

I think ma must have been revolving the matter in her mind, too, and arrived at a similar conclusion, for just before dusk she says to me:

"Lucinda, love, the molasses is out, and there's no gingerbread. Suppose you take the pail, dear, and step over to Mr. Mounterville's?"

I was nothing loath. I put on my best bonnet, threw my shawl picturesquely over my shoulders, took the tin pail, and departed.

It was a lovely evening. The month was February, and the snow lay piled high and white. There was no wind, and a crystal moon was rising like a shield of silver over the black pine woods, and the sparkling stars cleft frosty and keen. The white road glittered as if sown with diamonds; and the village lights gleamed and twinkled athwart the hazy blue atmosphere. All nature was conducive to tender musing as I went along for molasses, and my heart was melted within me like a roll of Mr. Mounterville's butter.

Mr. Mounterville's shop was one blaze of illumination, for three kerosene lamps, suspended in mid air, like the sword of—What's-his-name. The two counters were crowded with customers, and Phil Marks and Sam Wilson, the other clerk, were busier than nailers, and there was an overpowering perfume of coffee, and kerosene, and codfish, and apples that reminded me of "Ceylon's spicy breezes," and "summer isles of Eden in purple spheres of sea." And there was Mr. Mounterville, waiting, with superhuman energy, on three old women at once, and tying up quarter pounds of tea, and ounces of starch and pepper, with a rapidity that was the very poetry of motion, and made me wink again—Mr. Mounterville, who bounced away from the three old women

and was confronting me over the counter in a flash, with a heavenly smile illuminating his face.

"Good evening, Miss Lucinda, good evening. What can I do for you this evening?"

Now, if any of my pupils, in making a remark to me, had put three "evenings" so close together, I should most certainly have rapped them over the head for it. But Mr. Mounterville was different. I could bear tautology from him, and smile over it. A man who keeps three servants and two clerks need not stand on trifles of rhetoric.

"Half a gallon of molasses, if you please. Yes, it is a lovely evening, Mr. Mounterville. I declare, I was almost sorry the walk over was so short. Why don't you take advantage of this lovely weather and call and see us? Ma was just remarking to me, she hadn't seen you she didn't know when."

Mr. Mounterville's florid complexion turned absolutely crimson with delight.

"Did she, Miss Lucinda? Now, that was real kind of your ma. You see, we've been pretty busy, right straight along, in the shop here, and I ain't much of a visiting man, anyway."

"Oh! of course, business before pleasure; but you must try and make an exception in our favor. How do you sell these pickeled mackerel? Ma's so fond of mackerel."

"Miss Lucinda," Mr. Mounterville cried, trembling with eagerness like a calves'-foot jelly, "might I send her over a dozen, just to try 'em? Sam'll take them, and the molasses, too; and if you wait a minute, until I wash my hands and take off my apron, I'll see you home."

A dirty apron worn habitually around a lover's waist can hardly be less than a poisoned dart to the breast of any young woman of refinement. But I smothered my feelings and smiled. Yes, I saw Mr. Mounterville take off his apron and wipe two very dirty hands on it, and I smiled!

Sam winked at Phil as he seized the mackerel and the molasses. It was with the eye next Phil; but I saw it, and I folded my shawl around me like a Roman toga, and drew myself up, and turned my back upon that young man, with a solemnity and asperity of aspect, I'm inclined to think, he won't forget in a hurry.

There were dozens of customers in the shop, but, with a wild and reckless disregard of popularity and fractional currency, Mr. Mounterville shuffled them over to Phil, and stalked majestically out into the night, with me by his side. He didn't offer me his arm (to take a gentleman's arm in our village is equivalent to a binding engagement), but we trod along, side by side, slowly and sentimentally, with that Sam on ahead, stopping every now aud then to shift the molasses and mackerel from one hand to the other, and take a backward glance at us.

The night was lovely—I think I made the remark before. A profound stillness reigned, and everything in the firmament above and the earth beneath was conducive to a tender declaration. My heart throbbed, as the heart of a spotless maiden should throb, the first time the question is popped; and Mr. Mounterville, with his hat rather on one side, as he likes to wear it, and a pungent odor of codfish and onions about him, looked up at the moon with one eye shut, and a plaintive expression of countenance.

"Nice, isn't it?" remarked Mr. Mounterville—we had walked about three dozen yards without exchanging a syllable. "I always had a hankering after moonlight, and then it's a saving in kerosene, too, if a man only keeps his shop door open. How's the school getting on, Miss Lucinda?"

"Pretty well; much the same as usual."

"Don't you ever get tired of that there? It's sort of wearing to the feelings, I should think."

"Do you mean teaching?"

"Yes; it's wearing, ain't it?"

I sighed heavily; you could have heard me a good way off.

"But what can we do, Mr. Mounterville? We must live, ma and me, and to live we must labor. It is of no use complaining; it is our lot, and must be endured." (Sigh the second.)

"Well, but, Miss Lucinda, look here," said Mr. Mounterville, firmly; "hain't you ever thought of being married?"

Good gracious, here it was! I had thought Mr. Mounterville would have been embarrassed, and stammer, and tremble; but I can't say he did. He took it coolly, as though the matter in hand had been several new tubs of butter.

"Married! Oh, dear me, Mr. Mounterville; such a funny question, you know!" with an hysterical little giggle.

"Is it? Now, I should think it was time. When a girl comes to be your age she ought to marry, if ever she means to."

The odious brute! I could have pounded him, but I didn't. I only giggled more hysterically than before, and said nothing.

"I've been thinking about marriage a good deal myself lately," pursued Mr. Mounterville, looking severely at Sam, who, gazing back at us, had spilled the mackerel over the snow, "and I've about made up my mind to try it. I haven't had much time all along, up to the present, to reflect on such light matters; but I'm pretty comfortably off in the world now. Got a nice house, and everything fixed up in pretty good style, and all I want to top off with is a wife. I ain't so young as I've been, and no more are you, Miss Thompson, and I think we couldn't do better. Now, what do you say? I want a wife, and you want a husband, so suppose we clinch a bargain? I don't believe you can do better."

Good heaven! Did ever mortal maiden hear such a proposal? The coarse, nasty wretch! But I thought of the white mansion, and the horse and carriage, and servants, and swallowed my wrath.

"Oh! Mr. Mounterville, this is so—so sudden!" I stammered, and then I dropped like a hollyhock on the stem, and was silent.

"Sudden, is it?" said Mr. Mounterville, taking a pinch of snuff; "why, I thought I'd been hinting at it this some time (in groceries gratis, I thought). But never mind the suddenness, Miss Lucinda, it's out now, and let us have your answer—yes or no."

This was an upright and downright way of putting things with a vengeance! With a low-lived longing in my ten finger nails to scratch his odious eyes out, I stammered and drooped my head.

"I hardly know what to say, Mr. Mounterville; one feels—feels so—" and there I came to a deadlock.

"Good gracious!" cried Mr. Mounterville, wildly; "can't you say something? Yes, or no; that's easy enough, I'm sure."

"Yes, then," I returned, goaded to desperation; "if ma don't object."

"Oh! she won't object; she knows which side of her bread's buttered! I'll go in and speak to her—nothing like striking while the iron's hot. And here we are. Sam, I've kept my eye on you all along, and I'll trounce you within an inch of your life when I get back. Be off!"

Off scuttled Sam in mortal alarm, and enter Lucinda, followed by Mr. Mounterville.

Ma was in the parlor, darning stockings; and she got up and shook hands with my companion with motherly vim.

"So happy to see you, Mr. Mounterville—such a while since you've been here! Take the rocking-chair, do. And how well you're looking; dear me, growing younger every day—isn't he, Lucinda?"

"Thanky, mum," responded Mr. Mounterville, dropping into the Boston rocker and making it creak in every pore; "so a man ought when he's going to be married."

"Going to be married!" with a little scream. "Just hear that, Lucinda!"

"She has heard it, mum; I asked her coming along—that's why I made Sam fetch the molasses—and she's said yes; and all that's wanting's your consent—and that won't be wanting long, I reckon."

My ardent wooer snorted and took another pinch of snuff. Ma put her handkerchief to her eyes and sniffled; and I—I sat staring at the fire, and pulling the fringe frantically out of my shawl.

"I'm sure," ma sobbed, at last, "it's a trial, and you'll overlook a mother's feelings, Mr. Mounterville, though, not being a mother yourself, you can't be expected to understand. I don't see how I ever shall get on without her; and you'll have a treasure that money can't buy, though I say it that hadn't ought to, and—Lucinda, my love," with a sudden gush, "kiss me!"

I kissed ma, and then ma went over and kissed Mr. Mounterville, with a second gush. Mr. Mounterville snorted again, and took some more snuff.

"That means yes, don't it? Then we've clinched the bargain, I suppose, Miss Lucinda?"

"I suppose so," rather sulkily.

Thereupon Mr. Mounterville got up and shook my hand as if it had been the village pump, and shook hands with ma; and ma, in a gay and sprightly manner, tripped out of the room and returned presently with a bottle of blackberry wine and some slices of sponge cake. This innocuous collation being partaken of, and Mr. Mounterville's spirits rising with it, he proposed the first of April for his wedding-day.

"April Fool's-day, you know," with a chuckle; "so kind of appropriate, you know. Let's be married April Fool's-day, Miss Lucinda!"

If I could have shied the plate of sponge cake at his head, as he sat there, what an inexpressible relief it would have been to my overcharged heart! But I only "grinned horribly a ghastly smile," and said it should be as he wished.

So the wedding-day being fixed, and all things settled, Mr. Mounterville got up to go. I accompanied him to the gate, shook hands with him across it, and bade him good-night, and watched him plodding along the moonlit road, his hands in his pockets, and whistling for purest joy, like an asthmatic bullfrog.

As I stood there, contemplating the starry brilliancy of the sky and the spotless whiteness of the earth, in a pensive reverie, there started out from the corner of the house, and the shadow of an old pear tree, a young man, who stood still and confronted me.

I gave one little yelp of terror and started back, staring with all my might. And no wonder, for the young man was tall as a telegraph pole, and robed in sombre black; and his countenance was albeit handsome, with two blazing black eyes, and a shock of tar-black hair.

"Oh! let me not startle you, pretty one," said this remarkable phenomenon, in a deep and husky bass; "had I heart for falsehood formed, I never could injure thee! Do you take boarders in your house?"

The jerking suddenness with which this question was put, and the peculiar style of his two previous remarks, left me gasping like a stranded fish, and utterly unable to reply.

"And still she gazed," said this tall young man, rapidly, with a violent sweep of one arm; "and still the wonder grew! Tell, oh! tell me, fairest maiden, do you keep boarders?"

I found my tongue at last.

"If you'll step in, sir," I said, unlatching the gate, "I'll see. We do take boarders occasionally; but you must speak to my mother."

"Oh! thou hast been the cause of this anguish, my mother," chanted the tall young man, striding through. "Proceed, bright vision! I follow whithersoever thou leadest."

Really this young gentleman's style of conversation was remarkable, to say the least of it. I opened the door in considerable trepidation, and ushered him into the maternal presence.

"Madam, I salute thee, lo te salute!" said the seeker after lodgings, laying his hand on his heart and bowing low; "this fair creature, your daughter, I perceive, informs me you take boarders. Madam, madam, may I have that honor?"

"Goodness me, Lucinda, my dear!" cried ma, jumping back, and dropping her balls and needles in a paroxysm of terror and dismay.

"Fear not, fear not, fairest being!" said the gentleman, in a shrill, chanting voice, and transfixing me with his wild, black eyes. "I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in thy heart; but I know I want lodgings, whatever thou art. Answer me quickly!" getting excited, "and answer me truly, minion, wilt thou, or wilt thou not?"

Then it all flashed upon me—the tall young gentleman was mad! He looked like Lara, or the Corsair, a good deal; but I didn't care for my ideal just then, and would have given a year of my life to see Mr. Mounterville's florid complexion and sandy whiskers beaming on me through the door. I had heard that a lunatic, and a dangerous one, had escaped out of an asylum in the next town, and was supposed to be hiding in the pine-woods. And here he was, glaring upon me, with flaring black eyes.

"Speak!" cried our terrible visitor, advancing a step toward me, "speak! or, by the stars above, I'll tear thy perjured soul from out thy craven carcass, and fling it to the four winds of heaven! Wretch! miscreant! base minion!" with a howl and a hop nearer me, "this night shalt thou pay the penalty of thy crime; this night my wrongs shall be avenged!"

He made a grab at me, caught me by the shoulder, and waved the other arm aloft. I gave one shriek, and then my throat was grasped.

"Foul wizard, avaunt! I have marshaled my clan! Down, slave—down! Cease thy cries, for these dungeon walls are thick, and none shall hear, or help! Die the death! Die! worm, toad, siren, fiend in female form! Die!"

Not yet! The door was flung open, and oh! thanks and praise forever! in rushed Mr. Mounterville, and laid hold of my frantic opponent. My face was black, my eyes and tongue protruding, and I rolled over in a heap on the floor.

"Ah, vassal! dog of a Christian! thou hast come to the rescue!" yelled the madman; "thou wouldst shield the wanton thing! But share her fate, cur! Let me hurl thee to inferno!"

There was a clutch and a wrestle, and they rolled over and over, locked in each other's embrace. There is a time in the life of every man, I suppose, when he rises to sublimity—this was Mr. Mounterville's time. The Corsair couldn't have fought more manfully for Medora than my brave little man for me. And he was victorious! The madman was a mere skeleton, and his fictitious strength gave way. Mr. Mounterville pinned him to the floor and called to me.

"Fetch me the clothesline, Lucinda, and I'll fix this squirming vagabond. Ah, yes! you would, would you?—you crazy scamp! That will do; hold his heels, and keep him from kicking. Wasn't it lucky I dropped my pocket-book and came back to look for it; and I heard you yell out here on the road. Now he's safe; and there's the mother in a fit in the corner. See to her, Lucinda—this chap's all right!"

I shook ma, and sprinkled her, and slapped her, and presently brought her round. And all the while the lunatic lay on the floor glaring at the ceiling.

"Ah! you're quiet now, you matchless deceiver!" said Mr. Mounterville, giving him a little push with his toe; "but just untie you, and see the cantrips you'd cut up. Where would you be now, Lucinda, only for me?"

Where, indeed? Would you believe it? I walked right over and kissed Mr. Mounterville.

"False! false!" moaned the young man on the floor, "false as fair! Thou hast learned to love another; thou hast broken every vow! But go it—go it! Let fate do her worst; I'll not flinch!"

It was of no use—he was tied too fast. I went to the village for help, and our lunatic was removed with his eyes fixed on the stars, and dreamily murmuring poetry. He had been an actor, it appeared afterward, when his keepers found him, and one of the worst cases in the asylum. I was grateful to Mr. Mounterville, of course, and gratitude is akin to love. After all, Medora and Gulnare, and the rest of these poetic beings who had delightfully romantic husbands (by the bye, were they their husbands?) were unspeakably unhappy young women; and it was much better to marry a rich, stout, elderly grocer than a cut-throat brigand, if one comes to look at it in a proper light. And so I rather think I'm resigned to my fate.

April is drawing near; my dresses are being made; the school is broken up; and the grocery store flourishes like a green bay-tree. And sitting here, gazing at the moon rays with folded hands and dreamy eyes, I sign myself, for the last time, yours pensively, Lucinda Thompson.

GYPSY MYRA.

By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING,

Author of "A Wonderful Woman," "A Terrible Secret," "The Mystery at Blackwood Grange," "Sir Noel's Heir," Etc., Etc.

Patter, patter, patter! How drearily the rain falls to-day. Around the old house, through those gray old walls, the dying wind creeps, wailing and moaning, like the last cry of a broken heart. Sadly the rain beats against the window, with heavy sobs, like to human sorrow. With the voices of the wind and rain in my ears, with the black and murky sky above my head, and with gloom all around, my thoughts wander back, far away to the sorrowful past. On such a day as this should my life's story be told, for, like this ghostly, dreary autumn day, it rises before me, shrouded in darkness and gloom.

Far away, amid the grand old forest, the first fourteen years of my life were spent. The only world I ever knew was bounded by the majestic trees; the only faces I had ever looked upon were the dark-skinned members of our tribe. Sometimes visitors, gay ladies and gentlemen, would pass our encampment and stop to have their fortunes told, but I never saw them. My grandmother, Gypsy Kerine, as she was called, the only relative I ever knew, watched over me with jealous care. Never, she said, firmly, should the eyes of these gay young men rest upon child of hers again. The daughter of her old age had once fled with one of these. I was her only child, gifted with all the fatal beauty of my dead mother, mingled with the fire, energy and pride of my father, and now, while she lived, her daughter's child should never see one of her father's race.

Oh! the vague, wild longings that, at times, would fill my heart to see the beautiful world beyond, of which the young gypsy girls related such wonderful tales. Of beautiful ladies, dressed so splendidly, in robes that would dazzle the eyes to look upon, and of handsome, courtly gentlemen, who would pay them such charming compliments, and cross their palms with gold, for telling them of a future as glorious as a gypsy's dream could make it. Then, coming home, my fervid imagination fired with such tales, I would cast myself at Kerine's feet, and beg passionately, wildly, for permission to go forth and see all the beautiful world beyond for myself; and again and again I would hear, in answer, the same cold, firm, determined:

"Never, Myra!"

Sometimes I would grow desperate at this confinement, doubly irksome to one of my impulsive, fiery nature, and, with wild vehemence, declare my determination to escape. At such times my grandmother would smile sneeringly and point to where stood one who followed me everywhere—followed me night and day like my own shadow—a wild, untamed, lawless gypsy boy — by name, Lendon Bray.

Lendon Bray—oh, how I hated him! Ever since I had been able to remember anything, he constantly followed me. No dog could track out a fugitive's steps as he could mine, wherever I went. Through the forest, it mattered not how stealthily I looked round, I would see him behind me, creeping along in my trail like a snake. Oh, how I loathed and hated that boy; the very sunlight seemed hateful when he stood in it. Many and many a time, when driven nearly to desperation by his ceaselessly dogging my steps, have I wished it were in my power to murder him. I knew not then how sinful such thoughts were; could I have found the opportunity, I would have slain him, with as little remorse as I would crush a viper; but fate willed it otherwise.

One pleasant afternoon, in the glorious Indian summer, I was seated, musing upon the irksome, lonely life I was

obliged to lead, so different from the free, gay, careless life of the other gypsy girls, and longing, with strange eagerness, to leave the forest forever. Had I known how to pray, I might have implored help from on high, but I had never even heard the word. Some vague notion I had of a supreme being, who ruled over the destinies of men, but that was all. The idea of addressing one I could not see would have then appeared to me absurd and incomprehensible. So I sat there, weaving pictures and day-dreams to myself, of that unknown world I seemed never doomed to see, and feeling a sort of dreamy pleasure in knowing that I was alone. Gradually, however, I felt I was not alone. I had heard no one approach, yet, when I looked up and saw Lendon Bray before me, I felt in no way surprised.

"One of the tribe is dead, Myra," he said, gazing at me steadily, with his cold, glittering black eye.

"I wish you were dead, too, Lendon Bray," I said, passionately, springing to my feet, and turning away.

"Stop, Myra," he said, calmly, laying his hand on my shoulder, "it is Gypsy Kerine, your grandmother, Myra."

With a low, sharp cry of horror, I sprang to his side.

"My grandmother dead! Lendon Bray, what do you mean? How—when—where did she die?" I exclaimed.

"She died half an hour ago," he replied, in his usual cold, indifferent way. "She was walking toward the keeper's lodge, and fell into one of the fox traps. Keeper Lee heard her cry out and came toward her, and, finding her still alive, brought her here. She couldn't speak when she arrived, and died a few moments after."

I listened with a sort of bewildered consciousness, like one stunned by some sudden blow. Little cause had I to love Gypsy Kerine, and yet tears of real sorrow fell from my eyes, as the clods were laid on the face of the old woman. Stern and harsh to me she ever had been, yet she was my only relative, and I felt, as I took my last look at her dark face, that a great gap lay between me and every one else in the world.

From meditations such as these I was aroused by the sound of footsteps beside me. Looking up I saw the hated figure of Lendon Bray. He watched me quietly for a moment, then, with a strange, restless glitter in his dark eyes, he said, quietly:

"Free at last, Myra."

Free! Yes, I was free. I had not thought of it before, and my heart gave a sudden glad, exultant throb. I raised my head and drew myself up proudly.

"Yes, Lendon Bray, free—free for evermore! Free to lead what life I like; free to go and come when I please, unwatched and unfollowed. Free from you forever—remember that!"

"I shall remember, Myra," he said, calmly. "What use do you intend to make of your freedom?"

"What I please. It is no business of yours, that I am aware of," I answered, shortly.

"Oh, none whatever—certainly not!" he said, in his cool, careless tone, "only there is going to be a fair at the town to-morrow, and, as you've never been to one, I thought I would bring you."

"You bring me?" I exclaimed, with a scornful laugh. "No, no—not so; you will never see the day that I will accept a favor from you. I can take care of Gypsy Myra, and you mind yourself, Lendon Bray."

He made no reply. I stooped to gather a cluster of crimson berries for my hair and then turned proudly away. He took one step after me, and, laying his hand on my arm, said, sorrowfully:

"Myra, what have I ever done that you should treat me thus? Why should you dislike one who loves you?"

"Dislike!" I repeated, fiercely. "I hate you, Lendon Bray—oh, how I hate you, and I wish you were dead! Go back, sir! don't dare to follow me. Back—I command!" and I stamped my foot passionately.

A sudden, sharp gleam shot from his black eyes, as he hissed, from between his clenched teeth:

"Have a care what you say, girl. I am not to be scorned with impunity, Gypsy Myra."

A very fury seemed to possess me as he spoke.

"This for your warning, then."

I picked up a sharp stone and flung it with all my might at his head. One moment I stood; I heard his sudden exclamation, saw the stream of blood that flowed from his forehead, saw his face grow livid with rage, as he made one spring after me. A mocking laugh was my answer, as I darted through the

bushes, and flew, rather than walked, to the tents.

All the rest of the day I remained carefully out of sight. It was not dread of Lendon Bray made me shrink from meeting him—fear was a sensation I had never known; but I felt ashamed and grieved at what I had done. I did not know or care, perhaps, that it was wrong and sinful, but I felt humbled at having given way to my passion, and, after all, he had never really injured me.

The next day's sunlight, however, dispelled all these reflections. When I arose the people were all preparing for the fair — packing up carts, making fires, cooking breakfast, and getting ready their baskets for sale; all was bustle and confusion. How often had I sat watching them prepare for fairs and gatherings before, with feelings of envy; now I was going myself—going to see the beautiful world beyond, at last.

"Time to get ready, Myra," said Zita, the handsomest gypsy girl in the tribe, approaching and interrupting my meditations.

"I have nothing to wear," I said, looking up in dismay at her fanciful adornments, most of which had been stolen by her own clever fingers.

"Oh, no matter! Gypsy Ruth is not going, and she'll lend you hers. They'll just fit you, and, before night, if you're clever, you'll manage to nab enough to buy a dress," and Zita laughed, sang a wild mountain chorus, struck her tambourine gaily and jumped into one of the carts, all ready for the fair.

In a few moments I was all ready, and, running across the green, sprang into the same cart with Zita, just as it began to move away.

"How handsome Myra looks in her crimson gypsy cloak. She altogether outshines you, Zita," said some one behind me.

I turned hurriedly, for well I knew that voice, and crimsoned to the temples. Gypsy Zita tossed her raven braids coquettishly, and replied, angrily:

"Mind your own business, Lendon Bray. You needn't think because you're dying about Myra every one else is. Get off."

He leaped from the cart without a word. As he did so his cap fell off, disclosing his forehead, swollen and cut. I felt now sincerely sorry for what I had done, but before I could apologize he was gone.

"What do you intend to do in the fair to-day, Myra?" inquired Zita. "Sell baskets, tell fortunes, or pick pockets?"

"I am no thief," I answered, curtly.

"Oh, well!" said Zita. "I'll show you. It ain't hard."

"I don't want to learn to steal," I said, angrily.

"Well, dear me, you needn't get so cross about it!" said Zita, indignantly. "I'm sure you ought to be thankful for the offer. What do you intend to do—tell fortunes?"

I nodded.

"Do you know what to say?" persisted the good-natured Zita.

I nodded again.

"Who showed you? Gypsy Kerine?"

Another nod.

Zita, finding I was determined not to enter into conversation, turned around and began plying the next one to her with questions, until, to my great relief, the cart stopped and each one got out and mingled with the crowd.

For a few moments I stood by myself and gazed around, half-bewildered, on the crowd of people, moving to and fro.

At last I went forward, feeling curious to see the wonders of the fair. Suddenly some one right before me exclaimed:

"Oh, brother, look! look! See that gypsy girl with the red cloak—oh, how handsome!"

I looked up, somewhat confused, to see the speaker. It was a fair, richly dressed young lady, who leaned upon the arm of a young and eminently handsome man. As I stood, not knowing whether to advance or recede, Gypsy Zita passed me and whispered:

"Don't stand there like a fool all day, Myra. Go up and tell their fortunes."

Acting on this hint, I advanced boldly and, turning to the lady, I said:

"Let the gypsy girl tell your fortune, my pretty lady?"

"Just what I was going to ask you to do," she said, laughingly extending her hand. "Mind now, my dark-eyed gypsy, and predict for me a happy future."

"One so beautiful cannot be otherwise than happy," I replied, demurely taking her hand.

"There's a compliment for you, sis," said her companion, pinching her blushing cheek. "Now let us hear your fate."

I could scarcely refrain from smiling at the eagerness with which she listened as I predicted for her, with the usual cant of our tribe, an unclouded future.

She smiled brightly, when I had done, and extended me a guinea, saying:

"Now tell this gentleman's fortune, Miss Gypsy."

I looked up fearlessly in his face, but, meeting the look of profound admiration in his blue eyes, my own fell, and I felt the hot blood crimsoning my cheeks. I took his hand, small and white as a lady's, and every nerve in my heart thrilled at the touch of those soft, warm fingers. What a contrast it was to my little brown hand.

Oh! ye who talk so coolly and sedately of falling in love, little dream of the intensity of loving at first sight. From the first moment my eyes rested on the face of Willard Dale I loved him—loved him with all the passionate fervor that only tropical natures like mine can know. The blood seemed leaping, with new life, through every vein, as, with wild enthusiasm, I pictured a future as brilliant and glorious as even my heart could wish him. Involuntarily he caught his breath and flushed to the temples at my impetuous words.

"How glorious! how dazzling!" exclaimed his sister, her eyes kindling as I ceased. "Oh, Willard, what a future there is for you!"

He smiled slightly, and, still holding my hand, he drew from his own an elegant seal ring and placed it on my finger, saying:

"Accept my thanks and this ring, most beautiful gypsy, and may your own future be as bright as that you have foretold me." And, with negligent ease, he returned my low salutation and turned away with his sister.

During the rest of the day I moved about like one in a dream. The fair had lost all its attractions for me — everything was forgotten save him I had seen. Even Lendon Bray, whose dark face and glittering eyes met me at every turn, watching me with the old restless, eager look. How anxiously, as the day wore on, I scrutinized every one I met to see if he was near; but, in vain—he had departed.

At length, as evening drew on, we all assembled and entered the carts to drive home. Each had their own story to relate, their money to count, and the cleverness with which they had earned it to boast of.

"And what have you got, Myra?" inquired Gypsy Zita.

I had been sitting, gazing so intently upon the ring on my finger that I heard not a word that had been spoken until she addressed me. I started and colored, like one guilty, and wrapped my hand in my cloak to conceal the token.

"Don't hide it, Myra," said the voice of Lendon Bray, with a short laugh, "it's a pretty toy, and the giver was very handsome, too—wasn't he, Myra?"

His glassy eyes glittered as he spoke, with an evil light. I shuddered involuntarily, and, wrapping my cloak closely around me, turned away in silence.

Zita was about to begin questioning again, but something in my manner checked her, and the journey home was performed in unusual silence.

All that night, in my dreams, I saw the pale, thoughtful face and clear blue eyes of Willard Dale watching me. Yet, though he never for a moment was absent from my thoughts, I could scarcely suppress a cry of surprise and joy when I encountered him next morning in the forest. How well he looked! Better, I fancied, even than the day before, dressed in a green hunting suit, his gun on his shoulder and his dog by his side.

"Why, is it possible, my pretty gypsy!" he exclaimed, in surprise, throwing himself on the grass beside me. "I'd not the slightest idea I was to be so fortunate as to meet you here."

"Nor did I expect to meet you here, sir," I answered, looking up in the eyes I already loved so well.

"Some good fairy sent me hither, no doubt, to see the dark-eyed queen of the forest," he said, gaily. "Why, I have been thinking of you ever since we met yesterday. I intended to seek for you, but I knew not your name. What is it?"

"Gypsy Myra."

"Well, then, Myra, I have something to tell you. Yesterday, after you told me my fortune, an evil-looking gypsy youth sought me out and threatened me with all sorts of calamities if I ever spoke to you again. Who was he? Do you know?"

"Yes — yes — I know. What did you say to him?"

"Say to him!" he repeated, laughing. "I didn't stop to reason matters with him, I assure you. I just took him by the collar and pitched him, head first, into the middle of the crowd, as a gentle hint to mind his own business. I rather think the young gentleman won't trouble me for a while again."

As he spoke a rustling in the bushes

arrested my attention. I glanced around and beheld a pair of black eyes, blazing with ominous light, glaring at us from the thicket. Well I knew to whom they belonged. A strange dread of that evil-minded boy stole over me. I arose to go.

"What, Myra! you're not surely going to leave me so soon?" he explained. "Come, sit down; I want to talk to you."

"Not now," I replied, hastily. "I will be missed."

"Oh! Well, then, I won't detain you if you must go. Good-by! I shall soon visit you again, my pretty Myra."

He touched his cap gallantly, whistled to his dog, and plunged into the thicket, while I turned slowly and thoughtfully homeward.

The next day, and the next, and the next, Willard came, and every day, until autumn began to give place to winter, we met. And ever lurking on our steps came Lendon Bray. Look which way I would, his basilisk eyes seemed ever upon me.

One day I hastened, as usual, to our trysting place. It was one of those balmy days that sometimes linger on the verge of winter. Never had the forest worn so gay a livery as now, decked out in its many-hued dress. I seated myself beneath a large outspreading oak, our favorite seat, where often, during those happy latter days, I had sat, my arms around the neck of his favorite dog, listening to his stories of far-off climes.

How anxiously I listened for his loved footsteps. The time of meeting was already past, and never before had he loitered.

At length the well-known sound reached my ears. Bruno came dashing through the thicket, and a moment after his master was beside me.

"Have I made you wait, Myra?" he said, taking his seat.

"Yes, but it don't matter, now that you're here," I answered, gaily.

He was silent. I looked up, in surprise, and saw an unusual cloud resting on his brow.

"Has anything happened?" I inquired, in alarm.

"Yes, Myra. I have unpleasant news for you. I am going away," he said, slowly.

Going away! I was bewildered. I could not speak, so sudden came the shock. For a time we were both silent; then, controlling my emotions by a firm effort, I said, in a voice which faltered in spite of myself:

"I am sorry. How long will you be absent?"

"Three or four years, perhaps," he said, sadly.

What an eternity it seemed to me! I clasped my arms tighter around Bruno's neck and hid my face in his shaggy side. Willard watched me, in silence for a moment, then he unclasped my arms from around the dog, and said:

"Nay, Myra, you should grieve with your arms around my neck, instead of Bruno's! Look up—I want to talk with you."

Look up! I strove to do it, but, meeting those sorrowful eyes, my head fell over more heavily on his shoulder.

"I cannot—I cannot! Oh, Willard, I shall die if you leave me!" I cried, passionately.

"No, you will not—you must not, Myra!" he said, passing his hand caressingly over my long black hair. "I want to see you live to be something better than a gypsy. You must live to be a woman—a woman in every sense of the word—good and noble, and self-reliant—one I shall be proud of. Listen, Myra. You have a splendid voice, and might make your fortune as a singer. Will you not try?"

"Yes, yes—anything you wish," I faltered.

"Then, I shall speak for you to-morrow; and (I shall tell your fortune this time) when I return I shall see you, Myra, the gypsy no longer, but Myra, the prima donna of one of the first operas in London. And now, Myra, I shall see you to-morrow for the last time until my return from Germany, whither I am going."

The last time! How like a knell of death sounded the words in my ears. The very sunlight seemed to freeze me now, for the light and warmth of my life departed with him.

He had told my fortune truly. Ere two years were past I was the acknowledged prima donna of the —— opera. Night after night I was hailed with enthusiasm, and the fame of "La Belle Myra," the "Queen of Song," had spread far and wide. Many of the noblest in the land had knelt at my feet, craving for one smile; but I turned sadly from them all, for my heart was far away, in a "land beyond the sea."

And, during all this time, my evil

genius, in the person of Lendon Bray, pursued me. How often, when, with cheeks glowing and eyes sparkling, I would look around and meet those cold, gleaming eyes, that, in my proudest moments, could strike a chill to my heart. A loathing and horror unspeakable always crept over me at the sight. I would gladly have given all I possessed in the world to be free from him; but escape I could not. Night after night I would see him before me, watching me ever with the old eager, mocking sneer on his lips.

And so the three years of Willard's absence passed, and he would soon be home again. I thought of this, as I stood arrayed before the glass, one night, preparatory to appearing on the stage. That very night, three years before, he had bidden me farewell!

How I had changed in that time. Strange, I had never thought of it before; but it struck me forcibly now, as I gazed upon the image reflected in the mirror, clothed in the rich, flowing robes, and wearing the crown of Norma.

Would he know me? He had left me a little, tawny, dark-eyed, sun-burned gypsy. And now! I started as I gazed upon the dark, bright Oriental face, the large, languishing, black eyes, so full of fire and passion, the crimson cheeks and lips, and tall, regal figure. Involuntarily I wondered if "I be I."

A vague impression that he was present filled my mind that night, when I stood on the stage. I heard as one who hears not the thunder of applause that greeted me. I raised my eyes, and cast a sweeping glance over the audience, and —! Yes, he was present! That proud, erect carriage, the princely head, those dark blue eyes! Oh, well I knew them. Yes, he was there.

That night I sang as I never sang before. I forgot myself. I seemed inspired. I was no longer "La Myra," but Norma herself—sorrowful, noble, beautiful Norma. I lost sight of all present and sang with passionate abandon, until the last act of the opera. Then, utterly exhausted, I sank into a chair.

But not long had I to rest, for shout after shout, and cheer after cheer, broke upon my ears until the very house shook. The simultaneous cry of "La Belle Myra," rang again and again upon the air, until once more I stood before them. Then showers of wreaths and bouquets, many knotted with jewels, fell at my feet. Ladies, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, clapped their hands and waved their handkerchiefs, and the cries grew wilder and wilder, until, hoarse with the effort, the multitude lapsed into silence. Yes, it was a triumph—a triumph such as even I had never before won. Yet, as I bowed, with flushed cheeks and palpitating heart, my eyes fell on the hated face of Lendon Bray. A deadly sickness came over me, a sudden revulsion of feeling, the blood rushed to my heart, and I sank, nearly swooning, on a seat as the curtain again fell.

I had won fame and wealth, and the love of many; but the proudest and happiest moment of my life was when, one month after that eventful night, Willard Dale held me in his arms as his betrothed bride. Yes, that for which I had struggled was won; that which I had, ever since our first meeting, looked forward to with wild longing—Willard's love.

I had quitted the stage forever—for we were to be married immediately—and I had taken, as I hoped, my last look at the dark face of Lendon Bray.

'Twas the "night before the bridal." I stood on the piazza of my house, gazing dreamily out upon the moonlight, with all the conflicting emotions of a bride passing through my mind. Suddenly I felt a cold hand laid on my shoulder. I turned quickly around, and almost shrieked aloud as I found myself face to face with Lendon Bray.

"As you have not thought fit to invite me to your wedding, Myra, I thought I would call and tell you I intended to come without an invitation," he said, with an evil smile.

"Lendon Bray, what do you mean?" I exclaimed, a nameless dread creeping over me.

"Oh, nothing," he answered, with the same sinister look; "only, as I have watched over you so carefully all my life, I fancied you would at least have asked me to see you married, if it were only to get my blessing," and he laughed a short, bitter laugh as he spoke.

"Watched over me?" I repeated, fiercely, all my fiery passions roused by his gibing manner. "Yes, you have dogged me, night and day, like the crawling snake that you are! Haunted me, until I scarce dared go outside the door for fear of meeting you! Followed me, until you have made me hate you as I hate Satan himself—until I have been tempt-

ed to slay myself, rather than breathe the same air with you. I have loathed you from my childhood up, and ever shall, until the grave separates us."

"And the grave alone shall ever separate us," he hissed, in a tone that made me quail in spite of myself. "Look," and he took off his cap and pointed to a deep scar on his forehead; "do you see that? Well, your own dainty, jeweled fingers gave me that true love-token. You struck me, and so did he. You two were the first and shall be the last, who ever gave me a blow. I swore then to be revenged, and, though years have passed since then, those blows cry for revenge as loudly as ever. And so, Gypsy Myra, farewell till we meet again!" and with a bitter, mocking smile, he was gone.

During the remainder of the night I paced my room up and down, thinking of his ominous words. What could he mean? I dared not think of an answer to the question, for well I knew his dark, wicked mind.

Morning found me pale and restless. I stood like one in a trance, while my bridesmaid robed me for the altar. I saw them throw the long, rich veil over my head, saw them weave the orange blossoms through my jetty locks, heard them whisper, with startled looks, that I resembled far more a corpse than a bride. And all the time I saw before me the vindictive, revengeful face of Lendon Bray. It came between me and everything else. His dark eyes clouded all my future.

At length I was arrayed. Willard, bright, happy and joyous as ever, only wondering a little at my altered looks, handed me into the carriage, and we drove to the church. The spacious building was crowded to excess. Strangers had assembled from far and near to witness the nuptials of "La Belle Myra."

The ceremony began, and, as it proceeded, every beat of my heart sounded as loudly as the stroke of a sledge hammer. There was a dead, a profound silence throughout the church, as the clergyman pronounced the impressive words: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

Scarcely had the words passed his lips ere the report of a pistol broke upon the air. With a cry, so full of piercing agony that it even now rings in my ear, Willard sprang high in the air, and fell dead at my feet! Another shot broke the appalling stillness that reigned throughout the lofty edifice. I felt an awful crash, as if my skull were rent in twain, then all became dark—thought and consciousness left me, and I fell to the ground.

Months passed before I arose from that bed of sickness that had nearly been the bed of death.

The flowers had long been blooming on the graves of my husband and his murderer.

I did not learn how Lendon Bray came to his end until I was fully recovered from my wound. He had fled immediately after committing the deed, but was arrested a few days after. He was tried, found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. The very night of his condemnation he was found dead in his cell, having committed suicide rather than be publicly hanged.

Years and years have passed since then. As gold is purified by fire so is man by affliction. I have passed through the furnace, and, I trust, have come forth cleansed. I am walking amid the shadows, but I only wait the summons that will call me home, to be happy forevermore.

The Arm Chair Library.

Price, Ten Cents Each. See Special Offer Below.

Each Issue Consists of a Book of Sixty-four Double-Column Octavo Pages, with Colored Cover.

No.
a1. THE SCARLET LETTER. By Nathaniel Hawthorne.
a2. THE MYSTERY OF COLDE FELL; OR, NOT PROVEN. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a3. UNDER THE RED FLAG. By Miss M. E. Braddon.
a4. KING SOLOMON'S MINES. By H Rider Haggard.
a5. AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS. By Jules Verne.
a6. THE CORSICAN BROTHERS. By Alexander Dumas.
a7. LADY GRACE. By Mrs. Henry Wood.
a8. AVERIL. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.
a9. THE BLACK DWARF. By Sir Walter Scott.
a10. A NOBLE LIFE. By Miss Mulock.
a11. THE BELLE OF LYNN; OR, THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a12. THE BLACK TULIP. By Alexander Dumas.
a13. THE DUCHESS. By "The Duchess."
a14. NURSE REVEL'S MISTAKE. By Florence Warden.
a15. MERLE'S CRUSADE. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.
a16. A STUDY IN SCARLET. By A. Conan Doyle.
a17. ROCK RUIN. By Mrs. Ann S. Stephens.
a18. LORD LISLE'S DAUGHTER. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a19. THE ARMORER OF TYRE. By Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
a20. MR. GILFIL'S LOVE STORY. By George Eliot.
a21. A SCARLET SIN. By Florence Marryat.
a22. THE SEA KING. By Captain Marryat.
a23. THE SIEGE OF GRANADA. By Sir E. Bulwer Lytton.
a24. MR. MEESON'S WILL. By H. Rider Haggard.
a25. JENNY HARLOW. By W Clark Russell.
a26. BEATON'S BARGAIN. By Mrs. Alexander.
a27. THE SQUIRE'S DARLING. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a28. THE RUSSIAN GYPSY. By Alexander Dumas.
a29. THE WANDERING HEIR. By Charles Reade.
a30. FLOWER AND WEED. By Miss M. E. Braddon.
a31. NO THOROUGHFARE. By Dickens and Collins.
a32. THE GREAT HOGGARTY DIAMOND. By W. M. Thackeray.
a33. THE SURGEON'S DAUGHTER. By Sir Walter Scott.
a34. HILDA; OR, THE FALSE VOW. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a35. GRANDFATHER'S CHAIR. By Nathaniel Hawthorne.
a36. A TRIP TO THE MOON. By Jules Verne.
a37. THE PIONEER'S DAUGHTER. By Emerson Bennett.
a38. A LITTLE REBEL. By "The Duchess."
a39. MASTER ROCKAFELLAR'S VOYAGE. By W. C. Russell.
a40. THE HEIRESS OF HILLDROP. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a41. MISS MCDONALD. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
a42. HICKORY HALL. By Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth
a43. MEETING HER FATE. By Miss M. E. Braddon.
a44. IN DURANCE VILE By "The Duchess."
a45. DANESBURY HOUSE. By Mrs. Henry Wood.
a46. THE TWIN LIEUTENANTS. By Alexander Dumas.
a47. REPENTED AT LEISURE. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a48. THE RED HILL TRAGEDY. By Mrs. Southworth.
a49. AUNT DIANA. By Rosa Nouchette Carey.
a50. TREASURE ISLAND. By Robert Louis Stevenson.

No.
a51. A ROGUE'S LIFE. By Wilkie Collins.
a52. LADY DIANA'S PRIDE. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a53. GRACE DARNEL. By Miss M. E. Braddon.
a54. ALLAN QUATERMAIN. By H. Rider Haggard.
a55. KING ARTHUR. By Miss Mulock.
a56. LADY LATIMER'S ESCAPE. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a57. ALLAN'S WIFE. By H. Rider Haggard.
a58. THE SIGN OF THE FOUR. By A. Conan Doyle.
a59. PRETTY MISS SMITH. By Florence Warden.
a60. CHRISTIE JOHNSTONE. By Charles Reade.
a61. A DARK NIGHT'S WORK. By Mrs. Gaskell.
a62. THE TRAGEDY OF LIME HALL. By C. M. Braeme.
a63. SYBIL BROTHERTON. By Mrs. Southworth.
a64. THE RISEN DEAD. By Florence Marryat.
a65. SWEET IS TRUE LOVE. By "The Duchess."
a66. AT BAY. By Mrs. Alexander.
a67. AT WAR WITH HERSELF. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a68. THE MYSTERY OF NO. 13. By Helen B. Mathers.
a69. THE HAUNTED HOTEL. By Wilkie Collins.
a70. CRANFORD. By Mrs. Gaskell.
a71. A FATAL TEMPTATION. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a72. THE GOLD BUG. By Edgar Allen Poe.
a73. THE MAN IN BLACK. By Stanley J. Weyman.
a74. THE GHOST OF RIVERD ALE HALL. By Mrs. May Agnes Fleming.
a75. BEYOND THE CITY. By A. Conan Doyle.
a76. LADY ETHEL'S WHIM. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a77. THE HOUSE OF THE WOLF. By Stanley J. Weyman.
a78. THE MYSTERY OF CLOOMBER. By A. Conan Doyle.
a79. THE HAUNTED HOMESTEAD. By Mrs. Southworth.
a80. SHE'S ALL THE WORLD TO ME. By Hall Caine.
a81. THE ARTIST'S LOVE. By Mrs. Southworth.
a82. BESIDE THE BONNIE BRIER BUSH. By Ian Maclaren.
a83. THE HEIR OF BRANDT. By Etta W. Pierce.
a84. THE HOMESTEAD ON THE HILLSIDE. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
a85. THE HEIRESS OF HENDEE HALL. By Etta W. Pierce.
a86. THE SHADOW OF A SIN. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a87. THE LIGHT THAT FAILED. By Rudyard Kipling.
a88. LORD LYNNE'S CHOICE. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a89. THE BROKEN ENGAGEMENT. By Mrs. Southworth.
a90. THE HAUNTED CHAMBER. By "The Duchess."
a91. THE TOLL-GATE MYSTERY. By Mary Kyle Dallas.
a92. HER SECOND LOVE. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
a93. THE RECTOR OF ST. MARK'S. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
a94. THE SPY OF THE TEN. By Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
a95. DORA DEANE. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
a96. MAGGIE MILLER. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
a97. THE SLAVE KING. By Rev. J. H. Ingraham.
a98. THE BANKER'S HEIR. By Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
a99. ROSAMOND. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
a100. THE HOUSE ON THE ISLAND. By Etta W. Pierce.

Special Offer We will send *any one* of the above named books upon receipt of *ten cents; any three* for *twenty cents; any six* for *thirty cents; any ten* for *forty cents.* All books are sent by mail postage prepaid by us. Customers will note the saving secured by ordering a number of books at a time. Please order by the numbers, being careful to precede each number by the letter *a* as above. If the numbers are plainly written it will not be necessary to give the titles. Address all orders:

F. M. LUPTON, Publisher,

Nos. 23, 25 and 27 CITY HALL PLACE, NEW YORK.

THE

Leisure Hour Library.

Price, Five Cents Each. See Special Offer Below.

Each Issue Consists of Thirty-two Double-Column Octavo Pages.

No. 1324. THE GABLE-ROOFED HOUSE AT SNOWDON. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
No. 1325. THE CRIME AND THE CURSE. By Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth.
No. 1326. HINTON HALL. By Mrs. May Agnes Fleming.
No. 1327. THE SURGEON OF GASTER FELL. By A. Conan Doyle.
No. 1328. GLEN'S CREEK. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
No. 1329. THE WIFE'S VICTORY. By Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth.
No. 1315. HOLLOW ASH HALL. By Margaret Blount.
No. 1316. A PLAYWRIGHT'S DAUGHTER. By Mrs. Annie Edwards.
No. 1319. THORNYCROFT GRANGE. By Rett Winwood.
No. 1320. A FORTUNE HUNTER. By Annie Thomas.
No. 1323. SIMON DERRICK'S DAUGHTER. By M. T. Caldor.
No. 1324. OUT OF THE SEA. By Clara Augusta.
No. 1337. LADY GWENDOLINE'S DREAM. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
No. 1338. ADA HARCOURT. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
No. 1339. THE LITTLE ROUGH-CAST HOUSE. By Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth.
No. 1340. MISS JONES' QUILTING. By Josiah Allen's Wife.
No. 1341. THE CHILD OF THE WRECK. By Mrs. May Agnes Fleming.
No. 1342. THE KIDNAPPED HEIRESS. By Emerson Bennett.
No. 1343. THE SCULPTOR OF MODENA. By Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
No. 1344. THE SECRET OF GORESTHORPE GRANGE. By A. Conan Doyle.
No. 1345. LOIS GRANT'S REWARD. By Marion Harland.
No. 1346. BROTHER SILAS. By Etta W. Pierce.
No. 1347. THE CEDAR SWAMP MYSTERY. By Mrs. Jane G. Austin.
No. 1348. CORA HASTINGS. By Mary Kyle Dallas.
No. 1349. BEAUTY'S MARRIAGE. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
No. 1350. THE OLD RED MOUSE AMONG THE MOUNTAINS. By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
No. 1351. THE REFUGEE. By Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth.
No. 1352. OUR JONESVILLE FOLKS. By Josiah Allen's Wife.
No. 1353. THE ROSE OF ERNSTEIN. By Mrs. May Agnes Fleming.
No. 1354. THE MIDNIGHT MARRIAGE. By Emerson Bennett.
No. 1355. THE FAIR SLAVE OF ISMID. By Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
No. 1356. THE MYSTERY OF SAHARA VALLEY. By A. Conan Doyle.
No. 1357. THE VANES. By Marion Harland.
No. 1358. THE BLACKSMITH'S DAUGHTER. By Etta W. Pierce.
No. 1359. THE PIRATE OF CAPE CANAVARRL. By Mrs. Jane G. Austin.
No. 1360. THE LAWYER'S WARD. By Mary Kyle Dallas.
No. 1361. CORALIE. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
No. 1362. A MAIDEN ALL FORLORN. By "The Duchess."
No. 1363. THE BRIDE OF AN HOUR. By Mrs. Ann S. Stephens.
No. 1364. HUNTER QUATERMAIN'S STORY. By H. Rider Haggard.
No. 1365. THE DORCAS SOCIETY. By Marietta Holley.
No. 1366. THE GREAT HAMPTON BANK ROBBERY. By Mary R. P. Hatch.
No. 1367. ON HER WEDDING MORN. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
No. 1368. THE PHANTOM WEDDING. By Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth.
No. 1369. THE JONESVILLIANS. By Josiah Allen's Wife.
No. 1370. THE TRAGEDY OF A QUIET LIFE. By Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett.
No. 1371. NURSE BROWN'S STORY. By Marion Harland.
No. 1372. A MAD PASSION. By Etta W. Pierce.
No. 1373. A LITTLE IRISH GIRL. By "The Duchess."
No. 1374. GODFREY JANNIFER'S HEIRS. By Mrs. Jane G. Austin.
No. 1375. THE MYSTERY OF MORDAUNT MANSION. By Mary Kyle Dallas.
No. 1376. MY MOTHER'S RIVAL. By Charlotte M. Braeme.
No. 1377. FARMER'S HOLT'S DAUGHTER. By Charles Garvice.
No. 1378. PRETTY POLLY PEMBERTON. By Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett.
No. 1379 THE LOVE THAT SAVED HIM. By Mrs. Ann S. Stephens.
No. 1380. LAWRENCE ELSTER'S FOLLY. By Frank Lee Benedict.
No. 1381. THE SNOWDRIFT. By Charles Garvice.
No. 1382. THE MYSTERIOUS KEY. By Louisa M. Alcott.
No. 1383. RICH CORNER. By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
No. 1384. WOVEN ON FATE'S LOOM. By Charles Garvice.

Special Offer We will send *any one* of the above-named books upon receipt of *five cents*; *any three* for *ten cents*; *any six* for *fifteen cents*; *any ten* for *twenty cents*; *any twenty* for *thirty-five cents*. All books are sent by mail, postage prepaid by us. Customers will note the saving secured by ordering a number of books at a time. Please order by the numbers, being careful to precede each number by the letter *l* as above. If the numbers are plainly written it will not be necessary to give the titles. Address all orders:

F. M. LUPTON, Publisher, 23, 25 and 27 City Hall Place, New York.

ry.

elow.

lumn

s Cobb, Jr.
y A. Conan

Etta W.

Mrs. Jane

Dallas,

chess,"
s. Ann S.

H. Rider

ley.
By Mary

Braeme.
a D, E.C.

Wife.
Frances

land.

Jane G.

By Mary

raeme.
Garvice.
Frances

Ann S.

uk Leo

ott.

vice.

ooks
nts';
ents.
the
the
If
Ad-

ork.

The Chimney Corner Series.

Price, Twenty-five Cents Each. See Special Offer Below.

Each Issue Consists of a Book of from One Hundred to Two Hundred Double-Column Octavo Pages, with Illustrated Colored Cover.

No.
c1. **East Lynne.** By Mrs. HENRY WOOD.
c2. **Jane Eyre.** By CHARLOTTE BRONTE.
c3. **John Halifax, Gentleman.** By Miss MULOCK.
c4. **The Woman in White.** By WILKIE COLLINS.
c5. **Lady Audley's Secret.** By Miss M. E. BRADDON.
c6. **The Three Guardsmen.** By ALEXANDER DUMAS.
c7. **Tempest and Sunshine.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c8. **Inez.** By AUGUSTA J. EVANS.
c9. **Lena Rivers.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c10. **Retribution.** By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c11. **Meadow Brook.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c12. **Alone.** By MARION HARLAND.
c13. **The English Orphans.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c14. **The Gunmaker of Moscow.** By SYLVANUS COBB, Jr.
c15. **Fashion and Famine.** By Mrs. ANN S. STEPHENS.
c16. **Dora Thorne.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c17. **Uncle Tom's Cabin.** By HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.
c18. **Hidden Away.** By ETTA W PIERCE.
c19. **The Queen of the Isle.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c20. **Moss-Side.** By MARION HARLAND.
c21. **Madolin's Lover.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c22. **Bought with a Price.** By Mrs. ANN S. STEPHENS.
c23. **The Hidden Hand.** By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c24. **The Birth-Mark.** By ETTA W. PIERCE.
c25. **Magdalen's Vow.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c26. **Phyllis.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c27. **Married by Mistake.** By Mrs. ANN S. STEPHENS.
c28. **The Doom of Deville.** By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c29. **The Hidden Path.** By MARION HARLAND.
c30. **The Heiress of Castle Cliffe.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c31. **Her Ransom.** By CHARLES GARVICE.
c32. **The Rival Brothers.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c33. **Claire.** By CHARLES GARVICE.
c34. **The Gipsy Queen's Vow.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c35. **The Dark Secret.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c36. **The Midnight Queen.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c37. **Self-Made; or, Out of the Depths.** Volume I. By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c38. **Self-Made; or, Out of the Depths.** Volume II. By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c39. **Lord Elesmere's Wife.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c40. **Molly Bawn.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c41. **Daughters of Cain.** By ETTA W. PIERCE.
c42. **Beulah.** By AUGUSTA J. EVANS.
c43. **Elaine.** By CHALES GARVICE.
c44. **The Hermit of the Cliffs.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c45. **Britomarte, the Man-Hater.** Volume I. By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c46. **Britomarte, the Man-Hater.** Volume II. By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

No.
c47. **A Rose in Thorns.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c48. **Airy Fairy Lilian.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c49. **Gipsy Gower.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING.
c50. **The American Countess.** By ETTA W. PIERCE.
c51. **Lorrie; or, Hollow Gold.** By CHARLES GARVICE.
c52. **Cousin Maude.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c53. **Winning Her Way.** Volume I. By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c54. **Winning Her Way.** Volume II. By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c55. **The World Between Them.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c56. **Millbank; or, Roger Irving's Ward.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c57. **Doris.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c58. **Her Heart's Desire.** By CHARLES GARVICE.
c59. **Evelyn's Folly.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c60. **The Leighton Homestead.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c61. **The Story of a Birth.** By ETTA W. PIERCE.
c62. **Leslie's Loyalty.** By CHARLES GARVICE.
c63. **The Hallow Eve Mystery.** Volume I. By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c64. **The Hallow Eve Mystery.** Volume II. By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c65. **Set in Diamonds.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c66. **Edith Lyle's Secret.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c67. **Rossmoyne.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c68. **A Passion Flower.** By CHARLES GARVICE.
c69. **Heron's Wife.** By ETTA W. PIERCE.
c70. **Lady Damer's Secret.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c71. **Ethelyn's Mistake.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c72. **Portia.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c73. **The Baronet's Bride.** By Mrs. MAY AGNES FLEMING
c74. **Sweet Cymbeline.** By CHARLES GARVICE.
c75. **Mildred; or, the Child of Adoption.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c76. **The Romance of a Black Veil.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c77. **Mrs. Geoffrey.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c78. **Left Alone.** By Mrs. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.
c79. **Macaria.** By AUGUSTA J. EVANS.
c80. **Dora Deane and Maggie Miller.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c81. **Signa's Sweetheart.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c82. **Beauty's Daughters.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c83. **Twixt Smile and Tear.** By CHARLES GARVICE.
c84 **High Tides.** By ETTA W. PIERCE.
c85. **Miss McDonald and Rosamond.** By Mrs. MARY J. HOLMES.
c86. **The Sin of a Lifetime.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c87. **Faith and Unfaith.** By "THE DUCHESS."
c88. **A Willful Maid.** By CHARLES GARVICH.
c89. **A Dark Deed.** By ETTA W. PIERCE.
c90. **The Homestead on the Hillside and The Rector of St. Mark's.** By Mrs. MARY J HOLMES.
c91. **Dumaresq's Temptation.** By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.
c92. **A Mental Struggle.** By "THE DUCHESS."

Special Offer

We will send *any one* of the above named books upon receipt of *twenty-five cents; any four* for *thirty-five cents; any six* for *fifty cents; any ten* for *seventy cents.* All books are sent by mail, postage prepaid by us. Customers will note the saving secured by ordering a number of books at a time. Please order by the numbers, being careful to precede each number by the letter *c* as above. If the numbers are plainly written it will not be necessary to give the titles. Address all orders:

F. M. LUPTON, Publisher, 23, 25 and 27 City Hall Place, New York.